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ABSTRACT

The proceedings of a 1999 international symposium on interpreting for deafblind people presents 15 papers and a report of a survey of 20 countries and 5 organizations concerning the roles, training, and rights of interpreters for deafblind people. The papers are: "European Deafblind Comparative Study--Interim Report" (Lynne Hawcroft, United Kingdom); "Roles and Functions of the Deafblind Interpreter--An Overview" (Leena Hassinen, Finland); "Models of Interpreter Training--An Overview" (Jacques Souriau, France); "Rights to Interpreter Services for Deafblind People--An Overview" (Caroline Ellis, United Kingdom); "Psychic and Social Aspects in the Relationship between the Deafblind Person and the Interpreter" (Paul Andreoli, The Netherlands); "Social Interpreting--What and Why?--A New Project in the Danish Context" (Kirsten Jansbol, Denmark); "Deprivation of Information" (Drena O'Malley, United Kingdom); "Fasten Seat-Belts--A Guided Tour of the Research on Deafblind Communication in Forty-Five Minutes" (Ole Mortensen, Denmark); "Interpreting the Environment" (Monica Hermansson, Sweden); "Interpreting the Physical Environment for Deafblind People" (Tony Kirk, United Kingdom); "Holistic and Interactive Communication Methods" (Riitta Lahtinen, Finland); "Hands-On Signing--From Grassroots to an Accepted System?" (Frouke Schouwstra, The Netherlands); "Interpreting for Older People with Acquired Deafblindness" (Sarah Greaves, United Kingdom); "Communication through Touch Project" (Sarah Reed, United Kingdom); and "Propositions from the Symposium on the Development of Training and Services" (William Green, Italy). The survey report offers recommendations concerning strategy, the network of interpreting services, the range of interpreting skills, and training. Four appendices provide additional detail on the survey study. (DB)

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ED 444 332

PROCEEDINGS OF AN INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON DEVELOPMENTS AND INNOVATIONS IN INTERPRETING FOR DEAFBLIND PEOPLE

HELD AT LEEUWENHORST, THE NETHERLANDS
JUNE 1999
EDITED BY BOB PECKFORD

AND

REPORT ON A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ROLES, TRAINING OF, AND RIGHTS TO INTERPRETERS FOR DEAFBLIND PEOPLE

BY LYNNE HAWCROFT

SPONSORED BY A EUROPEAN COMMISSION GRANT FOR EXCHANGE AND INFORMATION ACTION ON EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE

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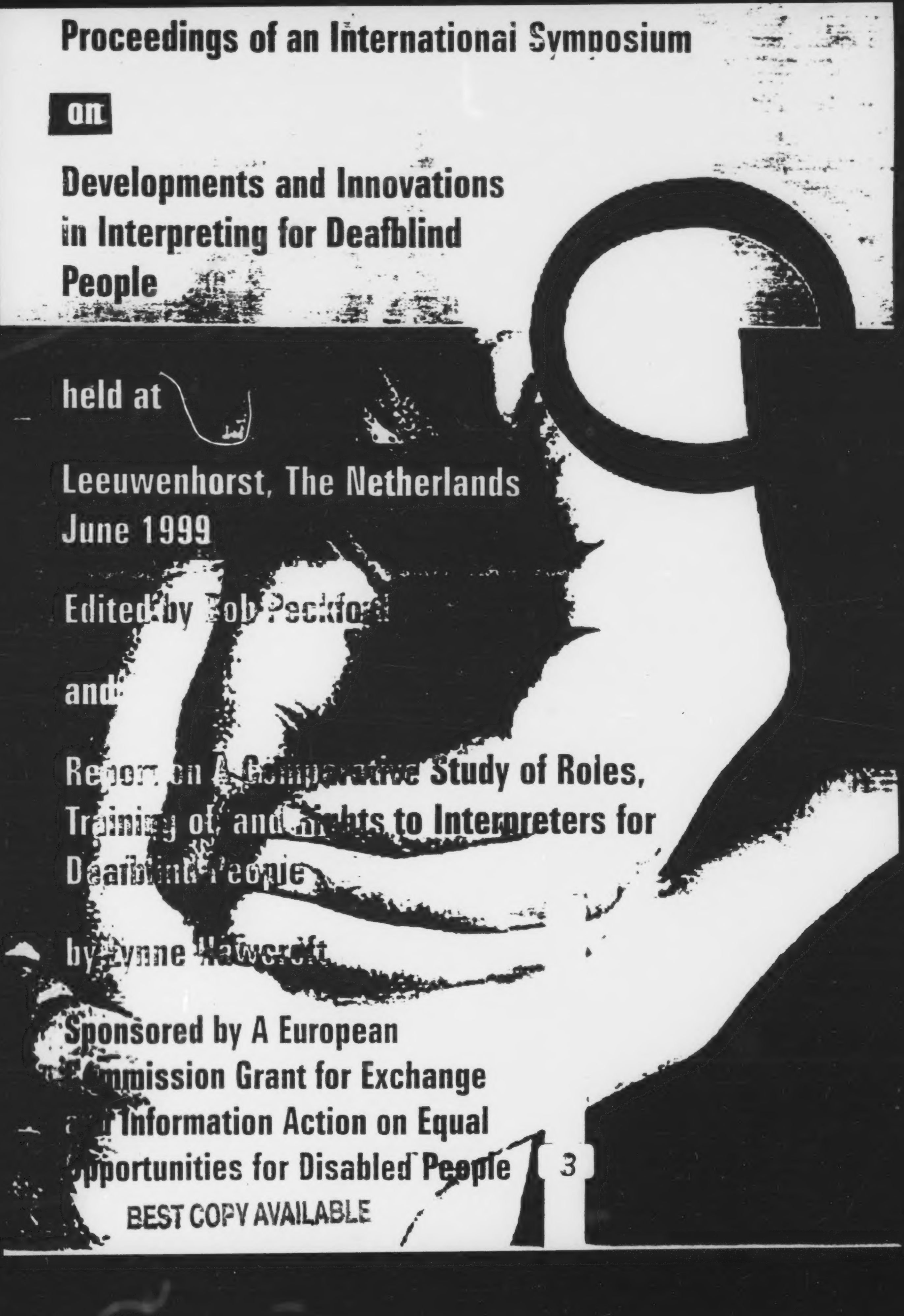

Proceedings of an International Symposium

on

Developments and Innovations in Interpreting for Deafblind People

held at

Leeuwenhorst, The Netherlands
June 1999

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Report on A Comparative Study of Roles, Training of, and Rights to Interpreters for Deafblind People

by Lynne Hawcroft

Sponsored by A European Commission Grant for Exchange and Information Action on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People

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The symposium was organised and the research commissioned on behalf of a partnership of organisations, in association with Deafblind International (DBI), by:

Bob Peckford, Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) (United Kingdom)
Ton Stiekema, Hogeschool van Utrecht, (The Netherlands)
Anneke Balder, The Unit Deafblindness of the Netherlands Foundation of Rehabilitation
William Green, Lega del Filo d'Oro, (Italy)

The successful completion of this project would not have been possible without the support and co-operation of the symposium speakers and participants, survey respondents and staff of the partner organisations. We are also grateful to Lynne Hawcroft for her commitment to the aims of the research and her tenacity in pursuing responses to the questionnaires, to Mirta Ambrus for her energy and skill in providing administrative support during and after the symposium and to Rhea Stiekema for the design work for the symposium programme and this publication.

INTRODUCTION

Bob Peckford (UK)

Bob Peckford previously worked as Director of Policy & Campaigns at the British Deaf Association. Now Director of Communication Skills at the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP) in the UK, he was one of the four members of the planning group responsible for the symposium.

I think most of you know that this is the third gathering of this kind and many of you attended the previous conferences on the subject in Portugal in 1994 and in England in 1996. This event in 1999 and the research which is linked to it, has been made possible thanks to an EC grant for Exchange and Information Action on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People and is organised by partner organisations in the UK, Holland and Italy in association with Deafblind International (DBI). The planning for this symposium involved one meeting and subsequently relied on contact via e-mail, telephone and fax.

It is clear from the papers presented at the previous conferences that their aim was to identify what was happening in interpreting for deafblind people in Europe and to share ideas, information and materials on this subject. In the process, these earlier events also identified roles and functions which involve communication with deafblind people but which are not interpreting - such as contact persons, intervenors and guide-communicators.

The planning group for this symposium decided to build on the earlier experience of these two conferences, but also to sharpen the focus on interpreting and to set some clearer objectives for the longer term. These objectives are a common agenda of action for the development of skilled and professional interpreting for deafblind people and a means for promoting that agenda. So, how to go about this task?

The planning group first decided upon a comparative study which would examine three key issues:

- The role and function of interpreters
- Models of interpreter training
- The rights of deafblind people to interpreters.

You will be hearing more about that study soon and many of you have contributed to it by completing the lengthy questionnaire.

Next, we asked three people to use the interim findings of the study and their own networks and experience to present an overview of these three topics - you will hear from them shortly.

The third step was to call for "technical" papers which would review recent research, developments and models of training.

The study, the overviews and the technical papers will form the basis of the agenda for action, but we needed a strategy for promoting that action. The instrument for this could be a recognized network of DBI that William has illustrated and will be returning to in the final session on Saturday.

The proceedings from the symposium and the comparative study will be published in September and distributed to you.

So, there we have it - we now know why we are here. If we needed any further motivation, we could do no better than to recall the words of Stig Ohlson from his keynote speech at the conference in Lisbon 1994. He said:

"Interpreters are of infinite importance and a well functioning interpreter service is one of the goals you have to reach before the final goal, which provides deafblind people with the ability to lead rich, outgoing, independent lives of high quality."

EUROPEAN DEAFBLIND COMPARATIVE STUDY - INTERIM REPORT

Lynne Hawcroft (UK)

A qualified social worker and interpreter for deaf people, Lynne is now a freelance consultant on social services and interpreting provision for deaf and deafblind people. Previously she held senior posts in deaf services in the statutory and voluntary Sector.

Background to the current study

In 1995 a survey was undertaken by the Acquired Deafblind Committee (now formally constituted as the Acquired Deafblind Network, of Deafblind International) which collected information about support services to deafblind people in 30 European countries. This earlier study provided useful background knowledge about services at the time and gave an initial contact list for the current project.

The 1995 study collated responses from 20 countries, four of which stated they had no services at all (French speaking Belgium, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Greece). In the other 16 countries there were core services common to most of them and a few distinct services in individual countries.

The core services identified were:

Table 1

Services	**Number of countries**
Interpreters	10 Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Germany, UK, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands
Volunteers	8 France, Germany, UK, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands
Guide dogs	7 Belgium (Flanders), UK, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands
Contact persons	5 Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Norway
Personal assistants	4 Germany, Iceland, Norway, Sweden
Intervenors	3 UK, Slovakia, Spain
Guide-help Services	2 UK, Sweden

The specialist services found only in few places included:

- rehabilitation and mobility programmes
- ambulatory counselling programmes
- occupational therapy

Thanks to Anneke Balder for providing information from her paper about this work presented to the United Nations seminar on the "State of the Art of Support Services in Europe" in 1996.

New Developments and Innovations in Communication, Guiding and Interpreting for Deafblind People

In 1998, a partnership of organisations in Italy, the UK and The Netherlands, received a European Commission grant for a study and symposium with the aim of creating a 'common agenda for action' for training workers with deafblind people. The aim was that countries with more advanced services and training in communication services for deafblind people would support countries with less developed provision. This would be done by looking at what factors contributed to the development of services and what other countries could learn from these experiences. Providing evidence of service developments in one country may be a way of supporting the need in other countries where they do not exist.

From the project partners a planning group of the following people was set up to co-ordinate the symposium and commission the study:
Anneke Balder - The Netherlands
William Green - Italy
Bob Peckford - UK
Ton Stiekema - The Netherlands

Focus and Methodology of the Study

The planning group engaged me as the researcher to construct the survey questionnaire and to write both the interim and final reports. The service identified most often in the previous study, that of interpreting, became the focus for the current work. In designing the study, consideration was given to the concept of interpreting, which has different meanings depending on the context in the individual countries. Where sign language interpretation is well established as a service, distinctions are often drawn between various forms of interpreting and what is included in the term. However, in countries where sign languages are not so well established, the term is used in a more general sense. The survey adopted this broad definition of interpreting, but one section of the survey examines in detail the roles of interpreters and other named workers in relation to deafblind people.

In ten countries identified as providing interpreting services, by the earlier work, all had training programmes, ranging between 60 hours and four years. It was therefore decided in this study to gather more information about the course content and training routes which might be useful to other countries, where no such courses exist.

We also decided to explore the trend in a number of countries to have the rights of disabled/deaf people enshrined in law. This would reveal, how the existence of legal rights for communication services influence the development of these services, and what effect legislation has on these developments.

Considering these issues led us to develop the three sections for the survey questionnaire which was sent to you. The questions were devised between myself and the three overview speakers, who follow me today. The three parts of the questionnaire were:

- Law/Legislation and Rights to Services
- Roles and Functions of Interpreters
- Educational Courses and Training

At the end of 1998 an introductory letter was sent to all known contacts in Europe, informing them that the survey was to take place and asking for their co-operation. The mailing list was based on the earlier project and on organisations known to planning group members. A random small number of additional countries outside Europe was included for further information and comparisons.
Twenty four questionnaires were sent to organisations in Europe
Six questionnaires were sent to Deafblind membership organisations in Europe
Three questionnaires were sent to non European countries (Australia, Canada and Japan)

Two versions of the questionnaire were sent out, one to organisations in each country working with deafblind people. These were usually training and/or service organisations and a shorter version was sent to known deafblind membership organisations.

The planning group decided to survey only one service organisation and one deafblind membership organisation in each country, as it was felt that multiple responses from each country would be difficult to reconcile.

The responses so far

To date, we have replies from 11 countries, so we are still awaiting responses from some of you. The individual overview speakers who follow will be looking in detail at the responses, but I want to conclude with a few broad observations:

- Even where legislation exists it usually only provides rights or access to services in very specific areas, such as courts. This is often linked to "official" state business and I wonder is it done for the benefit of deafblind people or for the benefit of the system? Would these areas be the first choice of deafblind people or would they have other priorities?

- It seems that in those countries where sign language interpreting services are well established, they often diversify into skills with deafblind people. Conversely, it may be more difficult to establish services to deafblind people without an existing framework.

- In some countries services for deafblind adults are only established following services for deafblind children. It may be that parents have been instrumental in highlighting the gaps, or that once services for children are in place they demonstrate the lack of services available when they become adults.

Once all the survey forms have been collected and analysed, the final report is to be completed by the end of September 1999 and circulated to all European countries and to the others who have contributed to the survey, by the end of this year.

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE DEAFBLIND INTERPRETER - AN OVERVIEW

Leena Hassinen (Finland)

Leena Hassinen has worked with the deafblind and deaf people for 20 years as a rehabilitation counselor for the deafblind, in various jobs at the Finnish Association of the Deaf, and as Principal at the Folk High School for the Deaf. For the past two years she has worked freelance in sign language interpreter training, deafblind interpreting, and training adult deaf people in various courses. Her PhD studies were in special pedagogy research on deafblindness.

Introduction

Interpreting for deafblind people is not only language transmission, but also consists of guiding, and transmitting information about the interpreting setting. The task of a deafblind interpreter is to mediate a complete picture to a deafblind person about the situation. This will be formed by three functions: language transmission, guiding, and transmission of visual information. All these functions may be included in an interpreter's work or may be divided between an interpreter and another person e.g. a contact person. For a deafblind person a complete picture of an interpreting situation means the possibility of understanding the whole situation and experiencing an interpreting situation functioning well. Several factors will influence how well an interpreting situation functions:

- Qualifications of an interpreter:
    - qualities such as responsibility,
    - experience of life
    - preparedness to cope with different situations
    - good sight and hearing

- Training of an interpreter:
    - knowledge of deafblindness
    - skills in communication methods
    - guiding skills
    - skills in transmitting visual information
    - language skills
    - interpreting skills
    - knowledge of ethics
    - practice

- Deafblind persons´ awareness of how to use an interpreter.
  An interpreting situation is never a one-way action - an interpreter needs constant feedback from a deafblind client. The role of the deafblind interpreter is also connected with roles of other professionals working in the field - this also affects the roles and functions of the deafblind interpreter.

Results

This part of the survey concentrates on the roles and functions of the deafblind interpreter. The number of the questionnaires returned to date is 16. Some respondents (three) answered only part of the questions due to lack of time. This explains the smaller numbers in answers about the role of the interpreter, deaf persons acting as interpreters, and rules or guidelines about the working conditions of interpreters. Other figures lower than 16 indicate that there has been no answer to that question

Functions of the deafblind interpreters

To describe the functions of the deafblind interpreter, three elements were used: language transmission, guiding, and transmitting visual information. The question asked was *'Which functions do interpreters have in your country?'*

The respondents (15 out of 16) answered as follows:

language transmission	15	(100%)
guiding	9	(60%)
transmitting visual information	12	(80%)

All three functions were mentioned in nine of the answers. As the results show, guiding was least included in the functions of the deafblind interpreter. In some of the answers it was unclear to what extent guiding should be a part of an interpreter's work. There might also be some other professionals whose responsibility includes guiding, e.g. contact persons in Denmark. However, answers to the next question gave more information about the role of the deafblind interpreter.

The role of the interpreter for the deafblind people as compared to an interpreter for the deaf

There were nine answers out of 13 to the question
'Please describe the role of the interpreter for deafblind people as compared to an interpreter for deaf people?'

Referring to the three functions of the deafblind interpreter most of the respondents emphasized all of them or those they included in interpreters work. There were also other remarks dealing with issues such as:

more psychological closeness with the deafblind person
alertness to total social and environmental situations
tasks being multifaceted
being physically robust
modality - not only language
awareness of the difference in role in which the guiding function is problematic.

Deaf people acting as interpreters for deafblind people

There were 13 answers out of 13 to the question
'Do deaf people act as interpreters for deafblind people?'
Four said yes and nine said no.

The role of deaf people acting as interpreters for deafblind people was seen in two ways:

- Deaf persons act as relay interpreters in conferences and small meetings where a deafblind person needs one to one or hands on communication. The deaf person transmits to the deafblind person the content of the interpretation from a professional interpreter. In these situations deaf interpreters have an advantage in that Sign Language is their first language.

- Deaf persons act as interpreters or guide-communicators in situations which are social or recreational.

Rules or guidelines about working conditions for deafblind interpreters

There were 13 answers out of 13 to the question:
'Are there any rules or guidelines about working conditions for deafblind interpreters?'

There were six respondents saying yes and seven saying no. Those saying yes described the guidelines or rules as being issued by the national deaf/blind/other organizations. Guidelines include references to functions of the deafblind interpreter (language transmission, guiding, transmitting visual information), working conditions and ethics. They are also seen as a way to promote the integration and independence of persons who are deafblind. Guidelines for deafblind interpreting seem to be not as formal as guidelines for deaf interpreters, being more based on mutual agreements.

Skills interpreters should have and most common methods of communication used by deafblind people

There was a two-part question about communication methods.
'What skills should interpreters have?'
'What are the most common methods of communication used by deafblind people in your country?'

Table 1 - Skills interpreters should have and the most common methods deafblind people use

Skills interpreters should have		**The most common methods of communication used by deafblind people**
Sign language	16	12
Sign language by touch	15	11
Fingerspelling	15	10
Printed letters on palm	15	8
Writing in appropriate way	12	4
Braille	12	10
Clear speech	12	13
Typing	12	6
Other	4	4
Object communication		Object communication
Lorm		Lorm
Signed Exact English (SEE)		2-hand manual, hand-Adapted
Interactive Tactile		Over-hand Sign language
Sign Language (AITSL)		Tadoma

The different communication methods show the variety of skills deafblind interpreters and also deafblind people themselves have to master. We have to also remember that many deafblind people use not only one communication method but a combination of many methods.

As the results show interpreters should master the variety of the communication methods although there might not be many deafblind persons using a particular method. This was also the situation in cases where deafblind people used mostly communication methods based on spoken language. Interpreters, however, should be able to cover all the methods.

Issues discussed recently about interpreting for deafblind people

There were 14 answers out of 16 to the question:
'What issues have you been discussing recently about interpreting for deafblind people and why?'

Most respondents mentioned many issues.

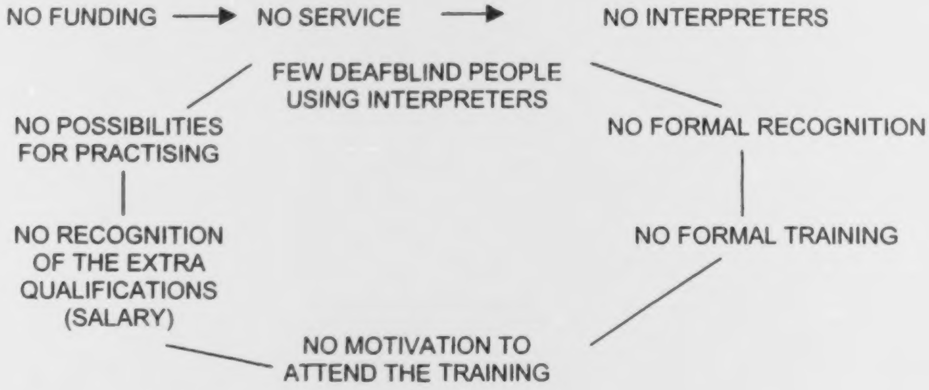
- In half of the answers (six) issues discussed recently were about the right and access to interpreting services, funding of them, and resources offered through them, the amount of interpreters and the number of hours to be used.
- Need for training including curriculum development was mentioned four times.
- As well as issues regarding interpreter's functions. This includes the functions of a deafblind interpreter, recognition of the skills, and role of the interpreter compared to other people working in the field.
- The code of ethics, working conditions, and guidelines for meetings were mentioned twice.

- Communication methods were also mentioned twice: introduction of Sign language by touch and unification of the Lorm alphabet.
- Assisting people who are deafblind in the setting of goals to improve their way of life, keeping them informed of government decisions and policies, how to advocate for government funds, and how to promote public awareness about deafblindness had also been issues discussed recently.

Current problems

The survey also posed a question about current problems. There were 12 answers out of 16 to this question. One problem mentioned most often was the lack of resources - either the lack of services, interpreters or funding. One of the problems was that there were very few deafblind people using an interpreter. Therefore interpreters have limited possibilities for learning and getting practical experience with interpreting for the deafblind. On the other hand the number of those wanting to attend interpreter training might be small due to low salaries. In countries with interpreting services the problems included the lack of a formal network; and recognition of role and functions of deafblind interpreters.

One could summarise current problems the following way:


NO FUNDING
NO SERVICE
NO INTERPRETERS
FEW DEAFBLIND PEOPLE USING INTERPRETERS
NO POSSIBILITIES FOR PRACTISING
NO FORMAL RECOGNITION
NO RECOGNITION OF THE EXTRA QUALIFICATIONS (SALARY)
NO FORMAL TRAINING
NO MOTIVATION TO ATTEND THE TRAINING

Improvements in the job of a deafblind interpreter

In response to a question about improvements in the job of a deafblind interpreter there were nine answers out of 16. They all dealt with similar issues:

interpreter training
recognition and special skills of deafblind interpreters
more opportunities for training and experience
extra pay for the qualification in deafblind interpreting.
It was also mentioned that there should be more possibilities to be able to work in pairs and to alternate during the day.

Developments planned

Answering the question:
'Are any new developments planned?'

A variety of development plans were mentioned in nine answers out of 16, most of them concerning interpreter training. Depending on the situation of the country, interpreter training was either just being developed and starting or in other cases it was being improved. This meant:

establishing different levels of qualifications
different possibilities of training (part time, full time)
integration of the training into the deaf interpreter training
integration of training into university levels
One answer was about establishing a national training center for deafblind services

Further comments

There were two further comments, the first one emphasizing that everything was just starting and the other one about the importance of supporting volunteers working in the field.

Conclusions

In conclusion, to the responses about roles and functions of the deafblind interpreter there are at least two issues one can draw out.

The first, which has been emphasized throughout the responses, is training of deafblind interpreters. It seems to be a key thing in developing a functioning interpreting service for deafblind people.

The second issue relates to the functions of the deafblind interpreter. Guiding seems to be the most problematic function in interpreters´ role. However, it is not possible to draw conclusions about the reasons for this.

Results in Detail

Functions of the deafblind interpreters

language transmission	15	(100%)
guiding	9	(60%)
transmitting visual information	12	(80%)

The role of the interpreter for the deafblind people as compared to an interpreter for the deaf

- Interpreters for deafblind people have to transmit visual information and sometimes to act as a guide. There is much more psychological closeness with the deafblind person.
- Language transmission and transmitting visual information.
- Modality (not only language) e.g. fingerspelling, guiding, environment transmission.
- Interpreters for people who are deaf provide just what information is being said. Interpreters for people who are deafblind work more closely and perform many tasks varying from straight interpreting of visual and auditory information to more hands-on involvement, assisting individuals who are deafblind with activities of daily life, depending of the individual´s functioning level. Higher functioning people who are deafblind use Intervenor services for appointments (medical, dental), church, banking etc. Other people who are deafblind may utilize their Intervenor services to encompass activities such as bathing, dressing, feeding, preparing meals. This is most often as a result of additional disabilities.
- We know the roles are different, but we do not know how much guiding is acceptable.
- We have no interpreter for deafblind people.
- Interpreter for deafblind people must also transmit visual information. Other than that no difference.
- Guide/interpreter we call it. All those three aspects mentioned above are of equal importance.
- Much more required of them e.g. need to anticipate situations, interpret incidental information; guide; give useful extra information; convey need of situation; also physical environment; be alert to total social & environmental situations; also physically robust.
- He/she should have all three functions mentioned in the previous point, but recognized translators in our country don´t have all of them and in fact they are not required to do so. On the other hand we have a very small number of interpreters who are not registered and they have all these functions (we have about two or three of them).
- Interpreters for the deaf transmit auditory information and interpreters for the deafblind include guiding, visual information and non verbal information.

Deaf people acting as interpreters for deafblind people

yes 4 no 9

The role of those acting as interpreters

- It happens during meetings. The deaf person transmits to the deaf/blind person the content of the interpretation from a professional interpreter.
- In some situations mainly social/recreational.
- Deaf interpreters can provide a unique outlook. They can interpret in a group setting where there is a hearing interpreter. They have an advantage in that Sign Language is their first language.
- Act as relay interpreters in conferences and small meetings where person needs one to one or hands-on communication. Also act as guide-communicators in social situations.
- We have no experience in this area. And we are afraid that it wouldn´t be very good. Maybe in this case when there are two deaf partners (husband and wife) and one of them loses sight.
- In social activities they act as relay interpreters.

Rules or guidelines about working conditions for deafblind interpreters

yes 6 no 7

- Guidelines include: lighting, timing, breaks, ethics.
- Promoting the integration and independence of persons who are deafblind; sound knowledge of surroundings and city, transportation; knowledge of orientation and mobility; provision of auditory and visual information occurring in their environment.
- But these are not well published or necessarily uniformly agreed as with sign language interpreters.
- Stated in the group agreements between employers and employees. Rules for working hours, and breaks etc. Guidelines given by the Institution for the Deaf.
- Guidelines for working as an officially recognized guide/interpreter: (ethics, guidelines for working conditions etc).
- Unofficial brochure (Services for the Deafblind) issued by the national blind organisation.

Issues discussed recently about interpreting for deafblind people

- Deafblind people want access to interpreter/guide, guides as of right.
- Creation of the interpreter services.
- The need for recognition of their skills and role, need for training, need for experience.
- The lack of interpreters.
- Differentiating between the functions of the interpreter and the contact person.
- Introducing Sign Language by touch as a common communication method of deafblind people.
- The number of hours, how much guiding is acceptable for a professional interpreter.
- Assisting people who are deafblind in the setting of goals to improve their way of life; keeping them informed of government decisions and policies; how to advocate for government funds; how to promote public awareness about deafblindness.
- Legal issues (specific), training and curriculum development, service (access and payment).
- Training of interpreters.
- The right to interpreting services and who funds it.
- Guidelines for meetings, ethics; including interpretation for deafblind people in interpreters for the deaf training.
- The version of LORM alphabet has not been unified yet. We would like to implement pictograms into the communication training.
- The code of Ethics, working conditions, transmitting visual information, because we think these are the most difficult aspects in the interpreters training.

Current problems

- The lack of forms.
- (See above no 3)
- The same persons do interpret for deaf people too and many young deaf people require interpreting for education.
- Very few deafblind people are in a situation where they are entitled to interpretation (i.e. in work or education). Therefore interpreters have limited possibilities for learning and getting practical experience with interpretation for the deafblind.
- Absence of interpreting services.
- Not enough interpreters.
- Lack of funds to expand and increase intervenor services for all people who are deaf-blind.
- Panorama of what, who is doing what; no formal network; no formal recognition of role and functions.
- There are very few deafblind people using an interpreter
- No money - no service.
- Financial access; interpreter training.
- There is little motivation for new interpreters to attend the courses - their salaries are low. Public is not sufficiently informed about the need to help deafblind people.

Improvements in the job of a deafblind interpreter

- Professional and competent interpreters.
- Better training at interpreter school; recognition and special skills; opportunities for training and experience; extra pay for this qualification.
- More often to be able to work in pairs alternate during the day.
- More assignments for interpreters for the deafblind.
- Introduction of an interpreting service, and acting interpreters.
- More funding of all levels of government to increase salaries of providers of intervenor services; more funding to expand intervenor services; our profession being recognized by the government in the same magnitude as interpreters.
- Recognition is the most important; training and salaries; the training of interpreters in recognized institutions and university level.
- Increasing the number of interpreters and financial resources in order to increase accessibility and to provide more interpreters for each event.
- We need better legislation regarding the fact that a deafblind person needs an interpreter and has the right to use his/her services.

Developments planned

- The current course for deafblind Interpreters (manual) is being revised. A new qualification in "Hands-on" is to be developed. A new qualification in deafblind Interpreting (Sign Language) is to be developed.
- A module: part time education; to get a proper education, now four modules = two year full time.
- In 1998 the education of sign language interpreters was extended from two and a half years to three years. A follow-up course is planned for interpreters educated before 1998.
- Discussing and solving the question of the training of interpreters for deafblind people.
- Plans for a national training center in which persons who are deafblind can access intervenor services appointments, education, computer training, employment training etc.
- Integration of training into university programmes.
- Inclusion of deafblind interpretation in deaf interpreting training; support by the national resource center.
- To make a practical use of the law about the interpreting for the deaf, to solve problems that arise in connection with it and to use the experiences while helping the deafblind.
- The new interpreters training (officially recognised by the Ministry of Education) has recently been implemented and we must continue developing materials and programmes.

Further comments

- We are at a starting point, but creating approaches to the question.
- There are still many volunteers who act as guide interpreters; action is taken in order to support them.

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MODELS OF INTERPRETER TRAINING -AN OVERVIEW

Jacques Souriau (France)

Jacques Souriau has been working in the field of deafblindness for 29 years including 25 years as the Head of a school for congenitally deafblind children in Poitier. Since March 1998, he has been the head of a National Resource Center for Deafblind children and adults. He has been the chairman of the National Association for the Deafblind and is a member of the DBI Working Group on Communication Development in Congenitally Deafblind People.

Professionals involved

In most of the countries surveyed, the concept of an interpreter for deafblind people is present. The idea of interpreter-guides for deafblind people seems also to be relevant in most of countries. By contrast, only two respondents mentioned the word "guide" for deafblind people. This suggests that people who are guiding deafblind people are also mostly acting as interpreters.

It is also mentioned that other categories of professionals are sometimes acting as interpreters or guide-interpreters, for instance; social workers, care workers, deafblind consultants, teachers, clinical psychologists, pedagogues, contact persons, deafblind counselors.

The fact that other categories of professionals are mentioned as acting as guide- interpreters should not mean that the profession of guide-interpreter should be mixed up with other kinds of interventions. But it has also to be mentioned that apart from some very precise situations like interpreting for a course or for a conference, people in charge of interpreting are also supposed to take care of other aspects of the situation and for instance must be able to guide deafblind persons or to be sensitive to aspects of the environment that could be of interest for the deafblind person.

It can be proposed that two categories of professionals could be designed:

- guide-interpreters (or interpreter-guides) who have all the skills for interpretation and guiding
- the professionals able to carry out the tasks that define the professions using language skills and guiding skills that are necessary with deafblind people.

Another word which is sometimes mentioned is " assistant " which probably means somebody able to assist deafblind persons in many tasks that are not only guiding or interpreting. That could include also reading, mail, calling on behalf of the deafblind person. A discussion is necessary about the definition of all these professional categories.

Table 1

	Professionals Involved	
11 questionnaires	**Number**	**%**
Guide for Deafblind people	2	18.18
Interpreter-guide for Db people	7	63.64
Interpreter for Db people	9	81.82
Other	4	36.36
Other :		
social workers, care educators		
Db consultants, teachers		
clinical psychologist		
pedagogues		
contact persons		
Db counsellors		

Interpreter-guides training

Four questionnaires mentioned that training for interpreter-guides is included in a course for sign language interpreters, and two mentioned special courses for interpreter-guides for deafblind people. The situation probably depends on what kind of services are already available in the country, but it seems that sign language interpreters can be very much concerned with interpreting for deafblind people. It could be suggested that in all courses for sign language interpretation at least an introduction to the specific conditions for interpreting and guiding for deafblind people should be included.

Table 2

	Interpreter-guides training	
11 Questionnaires	**Number**	**%**
In a course for sign language interpreters	4	36.36
A specific course interpreter-guides for deafblind people	2	18.18
No answer for five countries		

Content of training

In the questionnaires, there is a consensus about the content of the courses except on three questions - braille, typing and note-taking. Probably this means that in most cases training of interpreter-guides for deafblind people is derived from the training for sign language interpreters. The use of braille or typing and note-taking is more related to people who, for instance, were blind and became deaf and so do not use sign language as a main language.

It has also to be discussed whether interpreter-guides for deafblind people should master all the skills that could be required by any kind of deafblind people. Another idea could be that there exists two categories; one is interpreter-guides mastering sign language, and the second one should be interpreter-guides mastering all types of communication that are based on a previous competency in the oral mother tongue.

The concept of interpretation could be also discussed because, for instance, transcribing the conversation in braille for deafblind people who read braille is not really interpreting; it is only transcribing. And this transcription task involves other aspects that are not included in sign language interpretation which are for instance a kind of summarising so that the speed of reception by the deafblind person is adapted to the usual speed of speech.

11 questionnaires	**Number**	**%**
Sign Language	7	63.64
Sign Language by touch	7	63.64
Finger-spelling	7	63.64
Braille	4	36.36
Typing	4	36.36
Interpreting the context	7	63.64
Daily living activities and guidance	7	63.64
Specific ethical aspects	8	72.73
General knowledge about Db	8	72.73
Others	3	27.27
Other :		
Interpreting process		
Note-taking		
Guiding		

Method of training

It seems that there are two ways to organise the training for interpreter-guides. About half of the responses to the questionnaire mentioned that language skills or knowledge of deafblindness are not required before the training. In this case, the number of hours for the course is extremely high because people have to learn almost everything from scratch. By contrast, almost half of the responses mentioned that previous knowledge is necessary - either language skills (sign language), or knowledge on deafblindness. In this case, the number of hours required for training the interpreter-guide is much lower because the course is more about adapting previously mastered skills to the specific needs of the deafblind people.

	Yes		**No**	
11 questionnaires	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Language skills required	4	36.36	5	45.45
Knowledge on deafblindness	2	18.18	5	45.45

Professionals contributing to the training

Sign language interpreters and deafblind people are mentioned in most of the returns. This means that sign language is considered as very important among the skills that the interpreter-guide must acquire. It also means that the contribution of deafblind people is extremely important for supervising or providing practice.

Braille instructors, mobility trainers and trainers in daily living activities are less often mentioned, probably because aspects which are not related to sign language interpretation are considered as less important. It is probably true that in many situations deafblind people need more interpretation in sign language than pure transcription in braille or help with mobility.

It could also mean that these aspects are part of other professional activities. It is interesting to see that only half of the questionnaires mentioned interpreter-guides as professionals contributing to the training. Again it probably means that quality standards are seen as coming from sign language interpreters.

As regards social workers, family members and medical doctors, only a minority of the questionnaires mentioned their contribution. This may illustrate that most attention in the training is given to interpretation itself and less to the social and medical conditions that affect guiding and interpreting for deafblind people. Many questionnaires mentioned other contributors without giving details.

	Professionals contributing to the training	
11 questionnaires	**Number**	**%**
Sign Language Interpreters	8	72.73
Deafblind people	9	81.82
Braille instructors	5	45.45
Mobility trainers	6	54.55
Activities in Daily Living trainers	5	45.45
Confirmed Interpreter-Guides	5	45.45
Social workers	4	36.36
Family members	2	18.18
Medical doctors	2	18.18
Others	5	45.45

How many hours are used for the training of individual subjects

Not all the returns gave answers to this question and in some cases the answers are more related to projects than to established procedures. The span is extremely large, the lowest figure is 40 hours and the highest is four semesters. These figures are difficult to compare because they do not describe exactly the same things.

In some cases, training means helping professionals to adapt their previously acquired skills to the specific situations of the deafblind people. In other cases, all the skills have to be learned and sometimes include skills which are not directly part of the usual tasks of interpreter-guides. For instance, supporting deafblind children or youngsters in normal educational settings.

So, this question needs further discussion and each country will have to organise its training procedures in to the context of its own legislation and professional training procedures that are related to guiding and interpreting for deafblind people.

How many hours are used for the training of individual subjects					
11 questionnaires	**Language skills**	**Supervised practice**	**Theory**	**Other**	**Total**
Italy (project)		200	400		600
Belgium	10	15	15		40
Denmark	14	9	27	40	90
Canada		160			160
The Netherlands					120
Norway		1/3 of two years			
Canada		4 semesters			

Social recognition

Most responding countries report that there is an examination following training, however, it is not clear if this examination is for interpreter-guides or for sign language interpreters. Only half of the countries mentioned that there is a special acknowledged diploma for interpreter-guides for deafblind people.

The existence of a diploma is probably related to the level at which services for the deafblind are developed and recognised in the country. As regards salary, the answers do not provide clear evidence of the difference between guiding and interpreting for deafblind people and interpreting for deaf people.

Two countries mentioned that interpreter-guides receive lower salaries and two other countries mentioned that they get a higher salary. It is difficult to know why this difference exists. It could be argued that it requires more skills and so the salary should be higher. It could also be argued that interpretation for deafblind which requires one interpreter for each deafblind person, is extremely expensive, so this could be a reason for paying guide-interpreters a lower salary.

Social recognition		
11 questionnaires	**Number**	**%**
There is an examination	9	81.82
Interpreter-guides for deafblind people are allowed to be interpreter in Sign Language for deaf people	5	45.45
Special acknowledged diploma	5	45.45
Salary is:		
higher Norway Spain	2	18.18
lower Canada Denmark	2	18.18
Salary is the same	6	54.55

Practical training conditions

It seems that in most of cases training is financially supported by different kinds of organisations. Sometimes students are paid during their training as part of employment programmes. As regards the organisations providing the training, both universities and other kinds of organisations are involved and different types of training providers exist in the same country.

Practical training conditions		
11 questionnaires	**Number**	**%**
Who pays		
The trainee/student	5	45.45
voluntary organisations	2	18.18
Employers	3	27.27
Free (supported by the state)	5	45.45
Students are paid during training	2	18.18

Which organisation provides the training		
University	5	45.45
Voluntary organisation	3	27.27
Other:	3	27.27
High school		
College		
Counsellors		

General comments

One respondent mentioned that in many cases training is provided through direct experience under supervision of senior professionals. Three mentioned that, at present, the process of training interpreter-guides is at the planning stage, either independently or through co-ordination with training centres for sign language interpreters. And one respondent mentioned that the result of this seminar will be used for finalising the project of guide-interpreters training.

Conclusion

On the whole, it could be said that there is quite a consensus about the content of the training but a variety of procedures are involved in organising this training. Accordingly, there is still a lot to do regarding how the training for the various professional categories involved in guiding and interpreting for deafblind people is designed. So, a good result of this seminar would be to give guidelines as regards the content of training necessary for each of these categories.

RIGHTS TO INTERPRETER SERVICES FOR DEAFBLIND PEOPLE - AN OVERVIEW

Caroline Ellis (UK)

Caroline Ellis is Campaigns and Public Policy Manager for Sense which is currently campaigning for deafblind people in the UK to have interpreter-guide support, whenever they need it as of right. She joined Sense in 1997. Prior to that she was campaigning for change & human rights in the UK, with a group called Charter 88 and wrote for New Statesman and Society - a weekly political magazine.

Introduction

This paper on rights to interpreter services is based on information from 12 countries which returned completed questionnaires (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the UK) and some additional information on Finland and other countries provided by my colleague, Malcolm Matthews (Director of Policy and National Services at Sense).

Although a lot of information and detail is missing I will do my best to give you an overview of:
- what rights deafblind people in each of these countries have in relation to interpreter services
- what impact legislation has on the development of services;
- what the main barriers are in accessing interpreter services.

Entitlements to interpreter services for deafblind people vary widely from country to country but I will try and draw out any significant themes and trends. There are also some interesting new developments which I will point out. I will end by highlighting what I feel should be the key points in any common agenda for action on improving services to deafblind people.

Rights to interpreter services

There are several countries where deafblind people have legal rights to interpreter services but Norway is the only country in which deafblind people have this right because they are deafblind. In every other case deafblind people have rights because they are deaf or disabled: e.g. Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Netherlands. Of course there are other countries which have legislated for deafblind specific services such as Denmark where deafblind people have had a specific legal right to a contact person service since 1990. Everyone who falls under the definition of deafblindness is by law entitled to a contact person to help them with communication, access to information and getting out and about.

Four countries give deafblind people a right to a minimum number of hours of interpreter time for daily living (shopping, leisure, social activities, medical appointments) with extra hours for education and work. These are:
Belgium: minimum 36 hours plus 10 per cent of their work time.
Finland: minimum 240 hours (twice as much as deaf people). Some people receive more depending on where they live and there are different systems for education and work.
Netherlands: has an administrative right to a minimum of 18 hours interpreter time. Between 60-150 hours may be obtained if fought for. Like Finland there are separate systems for education and work and as many hours as necessary are provided.
Norway: minimum 500 hours with extra hours for work and medical appointments. Norway has the most generous entitlement of any country.

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Clearly there is a massive difference between rights in Belgium and rights in Norway, for example. I do not just mean in terms of entitlements to a minimum number of hours of interpreter time, either. Belgium reports that there are very few deafblind people using interpreter services there, whereas in Norway there are eight interpreter centres for visually and hearing impaired people funded by the government.

In the Czech Republic where interpreting services have not yet been developed, a law was passed last May giving deaf people a right to free interpreting in court and to 24 hours interpreter time for daily living/medical appointments which they must pay for themselves. Given that this law is called 'Act of Sign Language' I am not clear as to whether it applies to deafblind people who use other forms of communication. At least it is a legal precedent which deafblind people could use to strengthen any campaign for specific right to interpreter-guide support.

In other countries there are rights to interpreter services in certain situations, but often these are described as 'limited'.

In **Denmark** deafblind people have the same right as deaf people to interpretation which entitles them to interpreter support in employment, education and court. For employment deafblind people are entitled to 20 hours of interpreter time for every 37 hours of employment. The information Center for Acquired Deafblindness in Denmark remarks that very few deafblind people are able to exercise this right since very few are working or in education.

In **Italy** the General Law for Disabled People 1992 gives deafblind people the right to an interpreter for further/higher education classes and in court.

In **Sweden** there is no law giving a person a legal right to an interpreter but since 1982 the authorities have been obliged by law to provide interpreter services for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing people. In 1994 the entitlement to an interpreter was expanded under health care law. The Association of the Swedish Deafblind reports that:

"There are big differences between regional authorities responsible for interpreting service. The officials generally do not know much about deafblindness and the needs of deafblind people, and they need more information and education."

In the **UK** there are different arrangements for daily living, work, education and accessing public services. Everything however is discretionary and limited:
For **work** the Department of Employment makes grants through the Access to Work Scheme towards the costs of interpreter-guide support for deafblind people at job interviews and in employment. However deafblind people have sometimes experienced huge difficulties getting the officials who run this scheme and 'approve' all costs to acknowledge the particular communication and mobility needs of deafblind people.

In further/higher education a Disabled Students Allowance of up to £10,000 is available which can help pay for interpreter-guide support but part-time students are not eligible for this.

Duties are about to be imposed on providers of goods, services and facilities in the UK under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995. From October of this year they will have to provide an 'auxiliary aid or service' to enable disabled people to access the services or facilities in question. The Act includes specific reference to sign language interpreters as an example of an 'auxiliary aid'. Sense and Deafblind UK have been campaigning to get more explicit recognition of auxiliary aids for deafblind people including deafblind interpreters/interpreter-guides in the new Code of Practice which will accompany the new rules. The effectiveness of the DDA has yet to be tested so we shall have to wait and see to what extent it enables deafblind people to access basic services.

For daily living there are no rights. Sometimes a local authority can provide some form of communication support and support with communication and mobility is provided through communicator guide/guide-help services which can form part of a package of care under community care/disability services laws, although there is no explicit reference to such services or to deafblindness in any of the legislation. These services are only provided in or purchased by 20 per cent of local authorities in England and Wales. Access to such services is extremely limited with only around one in ten deafblind people living in the community having access to a paid and suitably qualified worker, according to our last research. Communicator-guide services have been won where an articulate deafblind person or local organisation have fought for them. They are not available as of right.

In **Canada** there is a legal basis for demanding the right to interpreter services but no specific rights. The Canadian Charter of Human Rights and the Ontario Charter of Human Rights allow disabled people (including people who are deafblind) access to services unless undue hardship can be demonstrated. The Eldridge Case that was heard by the Supreme Court of Canada established a right to sign language interpretation and this applies to government services and services contracted privately by the government. The Provinces all have Human Rights Codes that prevent discrimination against disabled people in both government services and private goods and services. The situation varies from province to province. Since there is no specific law that applies to the provision of Intervenor or interpreter services for deafblind people, if a deafblind person was refused access to services because the service provider would not provide an interpreter they would have to bring a discrimination case in the court. In Ontario there is a strong movement for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act which would impose duties on service providers to make their services accessible.

The position in **Austria** is not clear. A deafblind person requiring interpreter services will have a hard job finding anyone to fulfill this role since it is reported that there are no agencies or organisations providing these services, only private individuals (who charge for them). But it may be the case that deafblind people have a legal right to an interpreter for court appearances and that social security offices have a duty to provide and pay for interpreter support.

Countries without legal rights to interpreter services

In **France** there are no legal rights to interpreter services and no legal obligations either, although it is reported that employers, hospitals, education bodies, social welfare, and the courts are supposed to provide/pay for interpreter support to enable deafblind people to access them.

In **Spain** deafblind people rely upon a voluntary organisation – 'ONCE' (the Spanish National Organisation for the Blind) - provides interpreter-guides for education, medical appointments, work, court, leisure/social activities.

What difference does legislation make?

The recent developments in organising interpreter services in Scandinavian countries has been backed with legislation. Seven countries (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Spain, UK) said the lack of legal rights has been a barrier to developing services. For example, Spain says: "*...as services are only provided by one private institution and there is no legislation this makes it difficult for these services to get to every deafblind person.*"

Deafblind people are more likely to get the interpreter-guide support they need if special provision for their distinct needs is made in law.

Funding of interpreter services

In those countries with strong rights to interpreter services enshrined in law such as Norway, Finland and the Netherlands, the interpreter services are free at the point of use. They are also free in Sweden. In Finland funding is provided at local level through social offices. National government funds the service in Norway and the Netherlands. In Norway deafblind people are issued with coupons to sign and give to the interpreter once an assignment is complete. The interpreter sends the coupon to the social security office in order to receive payment.

The weaker the rights to interpreter services become the more likely it is that deafblind people have to pay out of their own pockets to get the service (although it is much more likely they will rely on untrained workers/volunteers or family instead):

Thus, in **Belgium** (where regional/local government funds part of the service) deafblind people have to pay interpreter expenses such as travel and parking.

In the **Czech Republic** deafblind people have to pay for interpreters except in court.

In **Denmark** interpreter services are free for education, work and court appearances but otherwise you have to pay around £50 an hour.

In **France** interpretation is free in some cases or partly supported by various bodies.

In **Italy** interpreter services are only free in further or higher education classes and court. Otherwise deafblind people pay for interpreter support for other purposes according to their means. There is a 'communication pension' for the congenitally deaf (Sense and RNID in the UK have promoted the need for a Communication Component to a benefit called Disability Living Allowance).

In **Spain** ONCE pays for the services, presumably through charitable funds.

In the **UK** you don't pay for interpreter-guide support for work or education (at least not if you are an undergraduate studying full-time). Service providers will be responsible for meeting costs of interpreter support under the Disability Discrimination Act but they have a 'get out' clause which talks about costs being 'reasonable'. Communicator-guides are free to some deafblind people, while others may be means tested by their local authority or made to pay a flat fee of say £15 a week.

Two new developments in specific funding for developing interpreter services were reported.

In **Denmark** a grant of 35 million Crowns (approx. £350,000) has been made over three years for a project on social interpreting for deafblind, congenitally deaf (sign language users) and acquired deaf people. Meetings are currently being held to decide how this should be spent.

Meanwhile in the **Netherlands**, following campaigning by deafblind organisations a sum of 2,500,000 Gilders (1,200,000 Euro, £0.75 million) per annum for four years has been budgeted by the Health Ministry for a pilot study to fund support services for deafblind people. There is no legislation behind this funding making reference to deafblind people but this finance is specifically for services to deafblind people. This pilot will probably involve two strands:

- provision of a "personal budget" (or vouchers) to deafblind people so that they can buy support from friends and neighbours or services from home care organisations, and
- funding of regional deafblind support services.

Rights cannot be implemented without resources

The fight for resources has to be part of any campaign. Of course, all groups of disabled people want their share of the nation's resources. Strong arguments for ear-marking specific funding for deafblind people are that this is a very small group who represent an exceptional need for specialised services and that the provision of such services can increase independence and so reduce the need for more expensive intervention later on.

Explicit references in legislation are required to ensure that statutory authorities provide sufficient funding to make interpreter-guide services available to all deafblind people.

How have rights been won?

In gaining rights to interpreter services the most important factor has been campaigning by sensory impairment organisations (usually deaf organisations) which has influenced decision-makers in central government. No additional details of exactly how battles were won were provided by the questionnaires. However, I understand that in **Italy** the communication allowance was won by the Ente Nazionale Sordomuti (core funded by the government since 1953) and the Friends of the Deaf (an Inter-parliamentary group of 150 MP's and senators) who were a highly effective lobby group. In the **UK** there is a very strong All Party Disablement Group in Parliament which forms an effective link between groups and parliamentarians, raising issues of concern to disabled people and lobbying Ministers on their behalf. So, if you don't have one of these groups in your countries go and set one up! I also believe that deafblind people in **Denmark** descended in great numbers upon their Parliament to gain their rights. We in the UK will be doing that, too!

What will the focus for future national campaigning be?

There are many problems that each country must address. Every single respondent country said deafblind people have problems getting interpreters.

- Eleven countries said there are not enough trained interpreters (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, UK). This is the perennial problem, isn't it?
- Nine countries said interpreting services are underfunded (Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK).
- Nine countries said some deafblind people don't know what is available (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK).
- Eight countries said services are not available everywhere (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK).
- Eight countries said services are provided for deaf people and don't really meet the needs of deafblind people (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, UK).
- Eight countries said there is no political support for providing interpreter services (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Italy, Spain, UK).
- Seven countries said the standard of interpreting services is different across the country (Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Sweden, UK).
- Only three countries said services are not good (Canada, Italy, UK).

In seven out of 12 countries surveyed deafblind organisations are campaigning to include the rights of deafblind people to interpreters in law/statute (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the UK).

In the **UK** Sense and Deafblind UK are launching the 'Yes to Access' Campaign for interpreter-guide/communicator-guide/intervenor support as of right. We are right in the middle of a discussion about how we want these rights expressed in law. We have been looking at different systems including the highly appealing Norwegian model. We want to move away from a discretionary system to a rights-based one, but the solution may be different for each different service.

Apart from campaigning for legal rights, priorities for the future among the different countries surveyed varied:

- The main issue in **Norway and Sweden** is to have more trained interpreters available.
- Two countries that already have legal rights to interpreter time want a right to more interpreter hours - **Belgium, Netherlands.**
- Deafblind people in **Denmark** want access to free social interpretation for visiting doctors, psychologists and psychiatrists; meeting with public authorities; meetings with bank, insurance company or lawyer; trade union meetings and political meetings; voluntary work in clubs and associations; leisure activities; social events in the family and weddings, funerals etc.; job interviews; buying larger private items (car, house etc). They are confident that this will be achieved in next three years through the interpreting project mentioned above.
- In **Italy** deafblind people hope for improvements in quality, quantity, and access to services.

- **Spain** hopes that interpreter services will reach a greater number of people.

- Deafblind people in **Canada, Czech Republic, France** and the **UK** hope the Government will provide more funds to expand and increase interpreter services.

- Deafblind people in **Austria** aspire to have an interpreting service, since none exists now! They are also discussing the right to have an interpreter service and who should fund it.

A common agenda for action?

It is hoped that the results of the Comparative Study on Interpreting for Deafblind People will help create a common agenda for action on improving services to deafblind people. As we have seen there are some common issues but the focus differs from country to country depending on how well developed services and legal entitlements are.

Nonetheless it might be a good idea to arrive at a common statements of principles and objectives. Something like this:

> *"All deafblind people must have free access to professional interpreter-guide services for daily living, social situations, education, work, health care and for accessing public services as of right and in accordance with their needs. This is a fundamental step towards achieving equal citizenship and social inclusion for all deafblind people."*

> *"Different countries will find different ways of achieving this right in practice. However in each case there must be: legal recognition of deafblindness as a distinct and unique disability in its own right; a commitment by national government to developing and expanding interpreter-guide services for deafblind people and specific funding to ensure these services reach every deafblind person."*

> *"Furthermore each country must take steps to ensure deafblind people are aware of their rights, have accurate information about interpreter-guide services and enjoy easy access to them"*

From the perspective of deafblind people there needs to be action on both rights to professional interpreter-guide services and communicator-guide/contact person services. Deafblind people need support with communication, access to information and mobility in every area of their lives. They need both highly qualified professional interpreter-guides for formal appointments and settings (work, education, medical and legal consultations) and trained communicator-guides in order to be able to get on with their everyday lives. Both are essential if deafblind people are to be equal and active citizens.

What can we do?

- Share campaigning experiences and expertise. In the UK Sense and Deafblind UK have joined forces for a campaign around these issue called 'Yes to Access'. We have been inspired by what has been achieved in countries like Norway and Denmark - the knowledge that things can be better has given us strength!

- Think about opportunities to take action internationally. Each year at the beginning of December we have the International Day of Disabled People. This could be an opportunity to raise awareness of these issues and perhaps even launch an international campaign on the importance of interpreter-guide services. There is also Helen Keller Deafblind Awareness Week towards the end of June which is marked in the US and in the UK with awareness raising campaigns. This year Sense and Deafblind UK have organised a Deafblind Lobby of Parliament to demand the rights to interpreter-guides, communicator-guides and interveners.

- We should also approach sympathetic Members of the European Parliament to promote action on the right to interpreter-guides for deafblind people. Now that European law outlaws discrimination against disabled people, there is more scope for action to promote equal rights for deafblind people at European level. Perhaps a Resolution might be the way forward - we can investigate the possibilities.

PSYCHIC AND SOCIAL ASPECTS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEAFBLIND PERSON AND THE INTERPRETER

Paul Andreoli (The Netherlands)

Paul Andreoli is a psychologist who worked for several years as manager of the Centre for Deafblind People in Kalorma, The Netherlands. For some years now he has worked as a professional consultant

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During international conferences and meetings with deafblind participants accompanied by two or three personal interpreters, I have observed that these deafblind persons fully participate in discussions. Speed of information transfer and complexity of information seem not to withhold them from active contributions. Based on their reactions you are convinced that they really seem to have a picture of what happened, not only on a language level but also on an 'environmental' level. So if we are looking for developments and innovations would it not be sufficient to follow the personal routes of these deafblind persons to the level of interpreting they managed to organise? Although I am convinced that there will be a lot of interesting information from their personal case-histories I think there is a big gap between their experiences with interpreting and those from the deafblind people I regularly meet.

From them I have heard a lot of complaints about and disagreement with the way interpreting has taken place. For example the lack of capacity in using different codes dependent of the kind of situation in which interpreting is needed, missing information due to a conceptual level which does not fit the frame of reference of the deafblind person concerned, missing information concerning the environment, etc.. Besides these objections more or less as regards content, a lot of comments are made concerning availability, lack of preparation - and 'negotiation' time, lack of knowledge concerning deafblindness due to the fact that most of the needs for formal interpreting is only met for by interpreting services for the deaf.

Deafblind people who make use of out-reaching support services from deafblind-specific organisations sometimes make use of the interpreter-guide capacities of the professional support persons from these organisations when formal interpreting is needed. So do deafblind persons living in residential settings: they make use of the interpreting capacities of their personal carers. Although 'formal interpreting' is not the core business of these professionals, their communication skills often meet the needs of the deafblind person in situations where formal interpreting is desired. Generally speaking there is more time for preparation and negotiation. Yet there is a lot of difference between the interpreting qualities of individual professionals. Due to their personal experience, deafblind persons often can make perfectly clear which professional fits their needs for formal interpretation and which professional certainly does not.

It is obvious that from this actual perspective that there is a lot of dissension among deafblind people concerning the state of the art of interpreting. Restricted access to communication and incomplete information about the actual, social environment cause a lot of feelings like rejection and isolation. The continuous fight for proper interpreting and the limited experience of success may result in a resigning or withdrawing attitude.

How to improve these psychic aspects concerning interpreting and how to develop a social relationship between the deafblind person and the interpreter? A relationship that is functional to the needs of the deafblind person and fits the professional aspirations of the interpreter in a way that this relationship contributes to the well being of both the deafblind person and the interpreter.

Before exploring potential developments I would like to examine some basic aspects in the process of interpreting for deafblind people. I hope that I will be able to reveal some important differences between the interpreting for deaf people and those for deafblind people. I think that for future development there is a certain necessity of loosening the strong historical ties between the deaf-interpreting culture/infrastructure and the developing culture of interpreting for deafblind people.

Let's have a look now at some of the basic aspects. The storage of new information is a complex process in the human brain. The information of the perceptual field starts to be processed in the so called limbic system. This brain structure has a double function, it deals with memory and with emotional behaviour. Information of emotional importance for the organism as a whole is selected for further storage. So there is a vital link between information-processing and the persons' role in maintaining quality of life and guarding his/her personal well-being. Notice that this is mainly an unconscious process. Because hearing and vision are (as distance-sense-organs) developed for providing the largest amount of information of someone's perceptual field concerning his actual environment. They give a lot of direct cues for the individual person to react on in a way that fits his/her personal lifestyle. For deaf people or blind people the scanning of the environment with the non-impaired distance-sense-organ facilitates a lot of 'emotional' information processing, and so a lot of potential points of connection for functioning in a way that fits the persons interests.

For a deafblind person it is of vital interest that he can influence the scanning process of the interpreter for the deafblind. Partly, this influence can be realized by preparing for the anticipated situations to be interpreted and, partly during interpreting by 'process-cues' sent out by the deafblind person for the interpreter. Deafblind persons often report that it is very important that the interpreter is someone they can rely on. They entrust the interpreter with personal information, personal interests and preferences. Making use of the services of an interpreter must feel safe!

What does this mean for the daily practice of interpreting? John for example is an adult man in his late thirties. His auditory-visual handicap is caused by Usher Syndrome type 1. For a meeting about developing support-services John arranged a hands-on sign interpreter and asks for literal interpreting of the spoken language. When visiting a theatre play he arranged a hands-on-sign interpreter and asked for resume interpreting of language and a lot of environmental interpreting. For his visit to the eye-doctor he prepared in advance with his interpreter to formulate some questions on paper written down in characters of sufficient size. He claimed a mixed interpreting of hands-on sign and some tactile fingerspelling and he preferred the eye doctors answers on his prepared questions written down by his interpreter during the consult so that he has more time to think about the impact of the given answers. John is quite assertive and explicit in formulating his wishes and needs.

Some interpreters I have spoken to are trying to stimulate deafblind clients to formulate in advance how and what they want concerning the previewed interpreting situation. By this means, deafblind persons experience that they can influence the way of interpreting in advance of and during the interpreting process.

Quite a few deafblind persons make clear that there is a need for reviewing of the interpreted situation, they like to check if they have correctly understood what had been said and happened in the given situation. Most deafblind persons who make use of a computer and a Braille device or large print on screen prefer to save the information on file. A deafblind woman who had a meeting with her lawyer made clear that she would have the meeting recorded on tape, so she was ensured that no relevant information could be missed.

On request of the deafblind person one interpreter used a kind of role play during the preparation for a meeting with an official of the housing corporation, not in order to practice how to formulate the questions but to inform the deafblind person about the type of questions he could expect.

Even when deafblind clients are not very explicit in how they want the interpreting in expected situations, preparation and reviewing offer a lot of opportunities for the interpreter to become sensitive to cues of the client concerning the necessary adaptation to the level of understanding, the environmental interests of the client etc.

An interpreter of a born blind, post-lingually deaf man reported that his client made clear that he was no longer interested in the tactile fingerspelled interpreting of a boring monologue of a speaker. He pushed away the hand of his interpreter who was presented with the ethical dilemma of when to re-start interpreting if something happens in the environment that may be of interest of his client.

I am an advocate for a continuous negotiating attitude of both the deafblind person and his interpreter. The deafblind person can express his needs and wishes explicitly or implicitly; the interpreter can inform the deafblind person of his interpreting capacities, his possibilities and limitations. By this, a mutual education will start as a never ending process.

It may be clear that we have identified quite specific characteristics of professional interpreting for deafblind people that urges for a special training for interpreters for deafblind people. I really wonder if supplementary modules for trained interpreters for the deaf will be the proper answer to the request for a professional and skilled interpreter for deafblind people.

SOCIAL INTERPRETING - WHAT AND WHY? - A NEW PROJECT IN THE DANISH CONTEXT

Kirsten Jansbol (Denmark)

Kirsten Jansbol is Director of The Information Centre for Acquired Deafblindness in Denmark. Previously she was Director of the Institute for the Blind and partially sighted dealing with rehabilitation and special education for those with both the congenital and acquired visual impairments.

The new Danish experiment with social interpreting was mentioned at the European Deafblind Network (EdbN) seminar in Poitier this past March. William Green later asked me: "What's going on in Denmark?" And with my free play on Shakespeare's Hamlet, and on William, he continued: "Is there something rotten in the state of Denmark? What is social interpreting?"

As a result William asked me to join this symposium to relate the developments in the interpreting area pertaining to the deafblind in Denmark. And I am pleased to be able to do so today.

Presently deaf and deafblind people have the right to the assistance of an interpreter in the following situations:

- During their education
- At their place of employment
- At trials
- When being seen by a physician (given that the physician judges interpreting necessary)

And it is true that the Danish state has earmarked 35 million kroner (approximately £3.5 million) for "social interpreting" over a three and a half year period - with £500,000 to be spent in 1999 and £1,000,000 a year for the next three years.

In the project proposal, social interpreting is defined to include interpretation in the following situations:

- Appointments with health professionals
- Meetings with public authorities
- Meetings with bank, insurance company, or lawyer
- Trade union meetings and political meetings
- Voluntary work in clubs and associations
- Leisure activities
- Social events in the family and weddings, funerals etc.
- Job interviews
- Buying larger private items (car, house etc)

The target group for the proposal comprises deaf and deafblind sign language users, people with acquired deafness, and people with a severe hearing loss.

Why are these efforts being made in the area of social interpreting in Denmark?

And why has the term "social interpreting" been invented?

Here we have to bear in mind, that the development of services for citizens of any country is dependent upon and determined in part by local factors that are primarily a result of the political and economic situation. The development of services for the deafblind, for example, takes place within such a context. Thus it is within this sphere that the efforts, and even struggles, take place to ensure equal opportunities for people with disabilities. And the services available to citizens are not necessarily based solely on citizen needs, in our case solely on the needs of the deafblind.

I will illustrate this by telling you about how the deaf and deafblind in Denmark have made their way to social interpreting.

In the fifties and sixties the western part of the world experienced great economic growth. One result - in the Danish context - was a law concerning rehabilitation enacted in 1960. In Denmark, the shortage of labour resulted in a focus on the labour reserve constituted by people with disabilities. And, more or less at the same time, attitudes toward the people with disabilities were changing a bit. People ceased to believe that the disabled have more in common with each other than they do with other people. Over time these changing attitudes also led to a change in language use. At least among the professionals, we no longer refer to disabled people, but rather to people with disabilities.

Through the seventies and eighties, this altered perception of people with disabilities led to a number of changes for people with disabilities in relation to education and employment. It became increasingly common to consider the specific abilities and interests of the individual. The traditional occupations for blind and deaf persons, for example, were becoming less and less common as both the blind and the deaf began to make more varied educational choices. For a deaf person, however, such a choice required interpreter assistance during classes, and this was rendered possible by the previously mentioned law on rehabilitation. Deaf people had thereby been granted the right to interpreting free of charge for their education. However, it should be added that the social authorities had to approve and still have to approve the course or programme for which interpreting could be made available free of charge. Approval was based on and is still based on an individual assessment of whether a given educational programme is likely to lead to employment and financial independence. Deaf people are therefore still not free to select their education, a choice that is in principle available to the rest of the Danish population.

As deaf people had been given the right to interpreting free of charge in an educational context, deafblind sign language users had in principle also been granted this right. For the deaf people and those with other disabilities who chose education outside a traditional “disabled” field, it became clear during the eighties that it was difficult to compete for jobs without special assistance. The blind social workers, for example, needed specific assistance in reading cases they were handling, and the deaf engineer, for example, required interpreter assistance during meetings at work.

In 1991, after significant pressure from the political organisations of people with disabilities, a new law was enacted in Denmark – a law pertaining to personal assistance for people with disabilities who are employed on regular labour market terms. In this way, deaf people were given the right to as many as twenty hours of interpreting each week. A pre-condition for such assistance was full-time employment and, as I mentioned, employment that was based on regular labour market terms.

A deafblind sign language user would have the same rights. However, no deafblind sign language users were employed on regular terms. Consequently, there was still no interpreter assistance for the deafblind.

This legislation changed in 1995 and now also includes assistance to employees who have protected jobs. Personally, I am familiar with three cases in which deafblind people in protected jobs make use of this legislation and are provided with interpreter assistance in connection with their tasks at work.

When attempting to understand the Danish invention of the term “social interpreting,” it is of central importance to recognise that access to free interpreting has been associated only with the labour market and with education as preparation for entry into the labour market. Only in these contexts have the deaf and deafblind had the right to interpreters paid by public authorities. Consequently, interpreting has not really been available for deafblind sign language users. In this connection, the deafblind have not been considered as a separate group.

What is a contact person?

During the second half of the eighties, focus on the situation of people with acquired deafblindness increased somewhat in Denmark. This included the formation of two committees on deafblindness. And in 1986, people with acquired deafblindness established their own organisation with Ove Bejsnap as president. Ove Bejsnap, who attended the EdbN seminar at Poitier is, by the way, entirely deaf and entirely blind.

This focus on the situation for the deafblind led in 1990 to a change in Danish social legislation, which was expanded to include a special contact-person for the deafblind - a special interpreter-guide service for the deafblind.

The law of Social Service states:

> *"Persons who are deafblind are in addition entitled to the necessary financial support required for the services of a special contact person."*

The tasks required of such a contact person are listed in the Ministry of Social Welfare's explanatory guide to this clause:

- To visit and communicate with the deafblind person
- To help keep him/her in touch with day-to-day events (via newspaper reading etc.)
- To function as a link between the deafblind and his or her environment
- To assist the deafblind with letters, personal matters, bills, etc.
- To function as a guide when shopping, visiting, conducting business, etc.
- To guide and assist him/her in contact with the authorities; in banks, post offices, etc.
- To help with activities such as courses, meetings, etc.

Practical help in the home, however, is not included in the tasks that a contact person is to perform.

The weekly hours for a contact person depend on the individual needs of the deafblind person. Hours typically vary between five and 25 per week. A contact person for a deafblind sign language user will most often also be deaf.

This system has led to a significant increase in the quality of life for a great number of deafblind people. Many have emerged from a form of isolation that those of us who see and hear could never fully comprehend. And these positive changes have resulted in the fact that some deafblind people in Denmark have found the energy to struggle for equal opportunities for the deafblind. The contact person system is invaluable to the individual deafblind person.

For the deafblind oral language user, the system presumably covers communication needs in relation to the hearing and speaking world. But contact persons for deafblind sign language users must fulfil special requirements. The optimal contact person for a deafblind sign language user is someone who is not only a sign language user possessing the human and professional qualifications required in order to be this close to another human being and constitute his/her eyes and ears; this person is also someone who is able to communicate with the hearing and speaking world. In other words, a sign language interpreter with the necessary personal and professional qualifications for being a contact person.

For several reasons, this optimal solution never became possible. One significant reason was the fact that there were not very many sign language interpreters available – which still remains a problem today. Secondly, this arrangement had to be as inexpensive as possible. And although interpreters don't receive princely wages, their salaries are considerably higher than the salary level established for contact persons. Thirdly, the comprehensive changes taking place in society and the labour market, with the shift from an industrial to an information society, resulted in a high level of unemployment among deaf people.

Deaf people with the necessary human and professional qualifications would therefore be able to fulfill three of the four requirements for an optimal contact person. And they could even fulfill the first three requirements for assisting a deafblind sign language user provided they would be given the opportunity to acquire the necessary professional skills. Consequently, the contact person arrangement generated job opportunities for a number of deaf people in Denmark.

However, the last of the four requirements for an optimal contact person, namely, the ability to facilitate communication with the hearing and speaking world, can naturally not be fulfilled by a deaf contact person. Therefore, the contact person arrangement does **not** meet the collective communication needs of deafblind sign language user. A number of situations will require the presence of an interpreter. And this is where the specific interpreting needs of the deafblind become evident.

How did "social interpreting" become a political possibility?

Just as the ways of the Lord are past understanding, the ways of the politicians can be beyond comprehension. Approximately ten years ago, several political parties were negotiating a special conciliation concerning cost of living salary regulation. The parties involved were granted disposal rights over a considerable amount of money each year. This sum is available for these parties to spend as they deem appropriate.

The organisations of deaf and deafblind people in Denmark have often called attention to their specific communication problems. The organisation of deaf people has been active in this area for many years, and the organisation of deafblind in recent years. For example, the previously mentioned president of the Danish Association of the Deafblind, Ove Bejsnap, arranged a happening in connection with the most recent general election in Denmark. Accompanied by his contact person, Ove Bejsnap showed up at an election meeting wearing two huge posters – one on his back and one in front of his body. The text on the posters (which had been dictated by Ove and written by his contact person) read that Ove wanted to participate in the election meeting but that he could not afford an interpreter, and was therefore prevented from participating. Many newspapers covered this happening, and of course several papers interviewed Ove Bejsnap.

This action and others like it, along with significant support from the professional community, caused the politicians, in 1999, to offer deaf, deafblind, acquired deaf and people with severe hearing loss the opportunity to communicate with hearing and speaking people in other than work-related contexts.

How will this be implemented?

It remains unclear how these new decisions will be carried out in practice, because just half a year ago no one knew that funds would be made available for this type of interpreting. This was announced only five months ago. At that time, the Ministry of Social Affairs was under the impression that the 35 million Danish kroner could be given as one pool to the three disability organisations covering the target groups. As might have been foreseen, this entailed rather comprehensive administrative problems, and the ministry have therefore now decided to assign the task to the organisation that has been responsible for interpreting for deaf people - the Institution for the Deaf. Subsequent to this development, this institution has (in cooperation with its board) proposed a model that ensures the influence of the respective disability organisations on the project.

How will this work?

Clearly, we are not able, at the present time, to say how the implementation of this project will work. You will have to ask us again two or three years from now. But when we are dealing with the deafblind, a number of specific issues should be given consideration.

In Denmark, the task of the interpreter is only to interpret – also when it comes to the deafblind. A Danish interpreter does not accompany the person in need of assistance. But should there be an interpreter/guide service available for the deafblind? Or should the deafblind person be accompanied to a political meeting, for example, by his or her contact person, then assisted by the interpreter during the meeting, and finally accompanied home again by the contact person? These questions and many others remain unanswered at the moment.

What happens when the project period is over?

Of course we don't know what will happen once the current project period is over. But assuming that the project becomes a success, the costs of a permanent arrangement would have to be met by counties and municipalities. And we don't know what conditions the counties and municipalities would stipulate in taking on this new task. Certainly, many lengthy negotiations will be necessary.

We look forward to being able to provide the answers to all these questions three years from now.

DEPRIVATION OF INFORMATION

Drena O'Malley (UK)

Drena O'Malley's earlier career was spent in community work. Currently she is Development Manager (Scotland) with Deafblind UK where she played a major part in establishing a Communicator-Guide service in Scotland. This is her passion!

What are the causes?

Inability to assimilate "incidental information"

What is 'Incidental information and why is it important?' It is information which is gained by looking around the room, or by listening while uninvolved in a situation. It can be as simple as the number of people in the room; proportion of male to female; people's obvious ethnic origins; whether people are attractive or ugly; well-dressed or in rags. It can be environmental information, behaviour behind a door. Indeed any information, for example, which would not normally be given by the chairperson of a meeting or the host at the party.

Incidental information gives basic information but more importantly tells us about emotions, habits, cultures, partnership possibilities, and also adds colour and flavour to life. Studying a man on a bus wearing what is very obviously a poorly-fitting wig may cause us to feel guilty but will indeed brighten up an otherwise dull morning as we struggle to get to work!

It is very difficult to communicate by touch information which is normally "assimilated" without effort using vision and hearing. Even the most skilled, enthusiastic interpreters often do not understand the importance of incidental information.

The effect of not receiving this information is both disabling in individual situations and over a period of time has cumulative effects. One of the most serious is the inability to 'read' situations. Without feedback the deafblind person stumbles on, unable to tell that the other person's body language is discouraging, or that a jealous partner is watching, or that the mood of the group has changed. If s/he is with a poor interpreter s/he may not even know when people have left the room!

Inability to make sense of information received by touch

There are many different ways to communicate by touch, all of them valid. Fully deafblind people must necessarily rely on tactile methods of communication if they are to remain involved with society. Many adapt to hands-on signing when they loose vision if British Sign Language (BSL) is their first language. In Scotland, many fully deafblind people are not natural BSL language users. And even those for whom BSL is a first language often find some difficulty in accepting tactile methods of communication. The reasons could be:

- Hands-on-signing interpreters using unfamiliar signs
- Lack of skills in the deliverer of information
- Language difficulties e.g. understanding term such as "grass roots"
- If the deafblind manual is used, spelling difficulties in both deliverer and recipient

Censorship

Interpreters consciously and sub-consciously censor information. Families are often the main source of information support, and often the most reluctant to give information which they know will be unpalatable. If they know it will cause upset, understandably they don't tell. Lack of skills causes censorship. If the interpreter does not know the signs for "sacred", "holy", "baptised" then this information is censored out.

Political Correctness causes censorship. Interpreters on Deafblind UK Interpreting Training show great reluctance to describe people's skin colour. Similarily, everyone else in the room may know of the sexual orientation of various partners but deafblind people will not be told. It is often considered inappropriate to tell deafblind people such things. "It should make no difference to them" or "It is not important" are two common responses from trainee interpreters. Society censors information by using difficult language.

Inconsistency

- Different information-givers give information to different levels.
- Different information-givers give different options - or NONE!
- Skills level of Interpreters vary widely.
- Family signs encourage easy short forms, sometimes inadequate for certain situations.
- Balance is important.

What are the effects?

Due to all of the above, the deafblind person can become part of the "Four Ds"
DISAFFECTED, DISAPPOINTED, DISENGAGED, DISAPPEARED

Effects on the individual
Inability to 'read situation' - deafblind people give an inappropriate response, make poor decisions based on poor information, resulting in loss of confidence.

Relationship difficulties
If communication between sighted-hearing couples averages 14 minutes per day, what can deafblind people expect? Communication is the basis of all relationships. Jealousy of a partner due to imagined wrongs is an ever-present danger.

Stagnation in learning
Building skills takes a lot of time. It is almost impossible to keep up to-date. This can lead to the use of old signs, out of date views, attitudes and clothes.

Withdrawal
Fully deafblind people who are deafblind manual users naturally put out their hand to get information. If they don't get it they eventually give up. There is little doubt the effects of deprivation of information are more severely felt by profoundly deaf people without speech. Speech allows the deafblind person to ask questions more easily, express doubts and seek help. The required skills to understand similar information from a non-speaking person are much greater and therefore rarer in the population.

What can we do about it?

Improve Training
Deafblind manual skills or sign language skills whilst very necessary are not enough. "Bolted on" deafblind manual skills are not enough. If British Sign Language interpreters wish to work with deafblind people they need to take it seriously and do the training, and understanding deprivation of information needs to be part of that training. We need to present opportunities for interpreters to learn the importance of assimilated information and knowledge, censorship and the ease with which we slip into it. And that should be done both on an academic and practical level.

Increase Skills
Paraphrasing skills are very necessary when interpreting at meetings using deafblind manual but they are difficult to teach and even more difficult to acquire. Notetaking skills can provide a base from which to work. The skills can be built. For the deafblind person dependent on the manual; fast, accurate paraphrasing is essential. Obviously verbatim is better, but not always possible. The 'Channel of Information' model is not necessarily appropriate for deafblind interpreting. Deafblind interpreters need to check, assess, adapt, reinforce and re-check on reception.

Better Organisation
The needs of deafblind people should be recognised as separate and unique, requiring to be met by specially trained people. So often, deafblind people are not thought about until the last minute and then it is assumed BSL interpreters will be able to meet all their needs. We need enough deafblind interpreters, breaks, information in advance and awareness of need.

Recognising Deafblind Culture
If those working in the field have access to a range of deafblind people they will begin to recognise that within the deafblind world there exists an embryonic culture that has much to do with deprivation of information. People who regularly make decisions based on poor quality information begin to develop coping strategies for the ensuing chaos in all areas of life. This can involve a range of characteristics which present too frequently to be merely accidental.

Conclusion

Deafblind UK's Guide-Communicator service has developed a highly technical method of tackling this problem - which should be highly popular in Holland - it is called "Plugging the Gap". When we identify a "gap" a group of skilled experienced people discuss how we might plug the information gap e.g.

- Football results, can be given by a co-operative guide/communicator at 6.00 on a Saturday evening. We developed methods of easily interpreting football matches during the 1998 World Cup.
- Telephone interpreting is now widely used on a daily basis for all people receiving a service.
- The interpreting of incidental information forms a major part of training
- Deafblind UK regularly re-writes information in accessible language.

If the interpreting world concentrates only on "skills-building" around sign language much will be lost to deafblind people. We need to work with them as individuals, identify the gaps in their information gathering process, and identifying means of plugging that gap!

FASTEN SEAT-BELTS - A GUIDED TOUR OF THE RESEARCH ON DEAFBLIND COMMUNICATION IN FORTY-FIVE MINUTES

Ole Mortensen (Denmark)

Ole Mortensen has an MA in Communication and has been Information Officer at the Information Center for Acquired Deafblindness in Denmark since 1994. Previously he was a teacher of communication at the University of Roskilde.

In this presentation I will try to give you an overview of the research relevant to communication with the deafblind. I will present the studies and some of their findings. The purpose is to give an idea of who has been doing what, with which results. I will be giving you a list with references to the literature I will be talking about, so that you may read further, if you are interested.

I will focus on tactile communication, as the one mode of communication that is unique for deafblind people. But I *do* realise that most deafblind people communicate through speech, and that some deafblind people communicate using visual modes. Research on hearing tactics, speech recognition and visual sign language will therefore not be included in this presentation.

Internationally there has not been very much research published specifically about communication for people with acquired deafblindness. Most of the research that has been undertaken has been on tactile sign language. Among the reasons for this are:

- In the past 30 years or so, many studies have focused on different linguistic aspects of visual sign language, such as phonology, morphology, syntax and discourse. With such growing knowledge it seems obvious to ask "How does tactile sign language differ from this?" The question is especially relevant following the realisation that many elements in visual sign language is expressed by facial or body movement, and not the hands that are the channel through which tactile sign language is transferred.

- Tactile sign language is a working tool for interpreters for the deafblind. A theoretical knowledge of the linguistic and functional aspects of tactile sign language is very important for interpreters and educators of interpreters for the deafblind. This forms a motivation to conduct or initiate research to develop this knowledge

- As a research field tactile sign language is a new and easily defined one, with a lot of obvious and important questions waiting to be answered.

In addition to the more scientific research and studies, there are quite a few publications with explanations and guidelines for communicating with deafblind people. In many cases it is practitioners who take the time and effort to put down their personal experience and knowledge to the benefit of others.

Examples of this are:

- Center for Sign Language and Sign Supported Communication, Copenhagen: "*Taktil Tegnsprogskommunikation*" (*Tactile sign language communication*), KC, København, 1997. A study on different aspects on tactile communication for deafblind sign language users resulting in a book (in Danish) used in the deafblind curriculum of the Center's education of sign language interpreters. This project has been extended until the end of this year.

- Nordisk Uddannelsescenter for Døvblindepersonale: "*Kommunikation med døvblindblevne*" (*Communication with people with acquired deafblindness*), Nordisk Vejleder nr. 22, Forlaget Nord-Press, Dronninglund, 1998. 11 articles (in Danish, Swedish and Norwegian) covering different aspects of communication with people with acquired deafblindness.

- Dona Sauerburger: "*Independence without sight or sound*", American Foundation for the Blind, USA, 1993.

- Theresa Smith: "*Guidelines: Practical tips for working and socializing with deaf-blind people*", Sign Media Inc., Maryland, USA, 1994.

- Bruce D. Snider (ed.): "*Being in touch: Communication and Other Issues in the Lives of People who are Deafblind*", Gallaudet University Press, USA, 1994.

- Susie Morgan: "*Sign Language with People who are Deaf-Blind: Suggestions for Tactile and Visual Modifications*" in Deaf-Blind Perspectives, Fall 1998

In some of the schools for sign language interpreters and interpreters for the deafblind, students have to do written assignments. This is the case in Finland, Denmark and Iceland. These assignments may give insight to a new unexplored area. For instance I have a report done by Finnish students that focuses on how much it matters what size, shape and temperature the hands of the interpreter are. These assignments are rarely available for a wider international audience. Considering how small a professional field this is and how little new knowledge is generated, we might want to consider ways of sharing this knowledge as well.

As part of our work at the Information Center for Acquired Deafblindness we monitor the research on communication for people with acquired deafblindness using Internet, literature databases and personal contacts. We focus on publications in a language, that is possible for us to read, so most of what I will be talking about here is written in English. Let's look at the major studies published in this decade that we know of at the moment.

Tactile Sign Language

- Leena Hassinen, Finland in association with Bencie Woll, UK: "*A preliminary study of tactile forms of communication*" (1990) This preliminary study focused on the following categories in material including both fingerspelling and BSL:
    - Body posture and hand arrangements
    - Space and location
    - Turn taking
    - Feedback
    - Signaling of grammatical structure

- Johanna Mesch: "*Dövblindas teckenspråk*" (*Sign language of the deafblind*), in Forskning om teckenspråk XVIII, Stockholms Universitet, Institutionen för lingvistik, 1994. A pilot study of the Swedish sign language used by deafblind people. Report in Swedish. Followed by a Ph.D.thesis in 1998.

- Charlotte M. Reed, Lorraine A. Delhorne, Nathaniel I. Durlach (MIT) and Susan D. Fischer (NTID): "*A Study of the Tactual Reception of Sign Language*", Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, p. 477-489, USA, 1995. ASL.

- Johanna Mesch: "*Teckenspråk i taktil form*" (*Sign language in its tactile form*), Institutionen för lingvistik, avd. för teckenspråk, Stockholms Universitet, 1998. Ph.D. thesis on tactile Swedish sign language. In Swedish, with an abstract in English.

- Sarah Reed: "*Communication Through Touch*". Report from an 18 month project with two aims: To gain a better understanding of the transition from visual to tactile reception of sign language and to pilot a training program in tactual sign language and make recommendations on a national training strategy. Sarah Reed will be presenting this work herself later at this symposium.

- Steven Collins and Karen Petronio: "*What Happens in Tactile ASL?*", in "Pinky extension and Eye Gaze Language Use in Deaf Communities", Gallaudet University Press, Washington D.C, 1998.

I will now briefly present a few of the main points in three of the most comprehensive works, focusing on different aspects of the use of tactile sign language.

Steven Collins (Gallaudet University) and Karen Petronio (Eastern Kentucky University): "*What Happens in Tactile ASL?*"
In this study Steven Collins and Karen Petronio focuses on four linguistic aspects of tactile ASL and how they differ from visual ASL. The questions that were addressed were:

On phonology: Signs can be broken into smaller parts (phonemes). The basic parameters include handshape, movement, localisation and orientation. In tactile ASL the receiver's hand is placed on the signer's hand. Does this result in changes in these four parameters?

On morphology: Many adjectives and adverbs in visual ASL are composed of non-manual facial expressions. How are these morphemes conveyed in tactile ASL, when the receiver cannot see them?

On syntax: In visual ASL questions may occur with a variety of word orders. What word orders occur in questions in tactile ASL?

On discourse: In visual ASL feedback is given by head nods and different facial expressions. How is feedback given in tactile ASL?

Among the findings were:

Regarding phonology: The two persons hold hands during conversation. This means that the sign space is limited compared to visual ASL. The result is that signs that are located near the outer edges of the signing space in visual ASL are articulated within a smaller space in tactile ASL.

In signs with body contact, the part of the body where the sign should be located moves toward the signing hand to make it easier to make contact. This is not the case in visual ASL. Some modifications of the signs, for instance in relation to orientation, are made to accommodate the flexibility and comfort of the 'listener's' hand.

Regarding questions: Questions have to be marked in a more explicit way in tactile sign language. For instance, in visual ASL the sign "question" may be used at the end of a yes/no-question. In tactile ASL, the sign "question" occurred after each yes/no-question.
Another interesting finding had to do with marking who a question is directed to. In visual sign language you will look directly at the person when directing a question to him/her. In tactile ASL the receiver cannot see who the question is directed toward, so the sign "you" is used at the beginning of the question to mark that what follows is directed to the receiver.

Regarding morphology: There are non-manual adverbs in visual sign language that combine meaning with the sign that is produced. In the study two adverbs "ee" and "mm" are used in connection with the verb "Drive". These two adverbs describe different ways of driving a car. In tactile ASL these (and other) adverbs were substituted by small differences in the way the sign was produced. When the meaning was "drive in a casual manner", the movement of the sign became slower and muscle tension was lax. When the meaning was "drive in a very intense manner", the movement of the sign became quicker and more tense.

Regarding discourse: In visual sign language as well as in spoken language, feedback can occur while the sender is giving his message. In tactile ASL the receiver needs to hold the hand of the sender, and in order to send feedback such as "Oh-I-See" the sender and the receiver would need to change hand positions for this message to be signed. (The analysed material was conversations between deafblind people). In these instances feedback is given without changing hand positions by tapping on the hand of the signer to tell that you understand, that you agree. The tapping could be with one finger or all four fingers. Another way was to "nod" tactually by pushing the sender's hand gently up and down. And yet another way identified was to squeeze the hand of the sender lightly. (In this material all used only one hand for receiving the signs.) What was particularly interesting was that none of the deafblind people in this study were aware that they were using these ways of giving tactile feedback.

Charlotte M. Reed, Lorraine A. Delhorne, Nathaniel I. Durlach (MIT) and Susan D. Fischer (NTID) did a study in 1995 of the effectiveness of tactile sign language as a communication method, measured as accuracy in the perception compared to the communication speed rate. Ten experienced users of tactile sign language were tested for their ability to receive both isolated signs and whole sentences.

Results
Isolated signs: 122 isolated signs, both one hand and two hands and both symmetrical and asymmetrical were received with an average accuracy of 87% correct, with scores ranging from 75% to 98% for the 10 individuals.

Sentences: 100 sign language sentences, representative of normal conversation, were adapted to tactile sign language taking into consideration the lack of possibilities for perception of visual elements such as facial expression, head and body posture etc. The average score was here 78% correct perception, with individual scores ranging from 60% to 85%. The production rate, i.e. the speed of signing, ranged from slow to normal and the results were more or less independent of the speed.

It seems that isolated signs were easier to receive than sentences, contrary to what is true for reception of, for instance, speech - where the context helps the understanding. The study showed that the largest part of the errors in perceiving isolated signs were due to a misperception of the sign's location. Two signs can be identical with the exception of location, i.e. the place where the signs are articulated.

This indicates that one of the major difficulties in receiving tactile sign language for a deafblind person lies in determining exactly where near the signer's body the sign is produced. In Leena Hassinen's study at Bristol University she describes a deafblind person who had developed a special communication technique with his family. Signs that would normally be articulated near the signer's body were articulated near the receiver's body instead. This made it much easier for the deafblind person to determine the exact location of the sign.

Johanna Mesch from the University of Stockholm noted in her pilot study that it seemed that deafblind people use fewer pointing gestures and make less use of the communication space in front of them in connection with nouns and as person deiksis. This might also be related to the same difficulty of determining exact locations of signs.

Johanna Mesch's Ph.D. thesis from 1998 was published in a book of app. 240 pages, so I will not be able to do it justice in this short time. Mesch focuses on turn-taking and questions in the conversation between deafblind persons using tactile sign language. Her material was video recordings of six conversations, four with two deafblind persons and two where one was deaf and the other was deafblind.

The study shows that deafblind signers use their hands in two different conversation positions. In the monologue position both the signer's hands are held under the hands of the listener, whereas in the dialogue position both participants hold their hands in identical ways: the right hand under the other person's left hand, and the left hand on top of the other person's right hand. It is also described how these two positions affect two handed signs, and how feedback is given in the two positions.

The study also shows how differences in the vertical and horizontal planes between the two persons are used in turntaking regulation. In the study, four different conversational levels were identified in the vertical plane, i.e. places where their hands are during conversation:

- Resting level (neutral)
- Turn level
- Hesitation level
- Turn change level

The speaker (turn holder) may signal that he is ready to end his turn by lowering the hands from the turn level to the turn change level. Or he may signal that he is not ready to give up his turn, but needs a moment to think before continuing by holding the hands at the hesitation level.

In the horizontal plane three different turn zones were identified. Closest to the speakers are their own turn zones, and in the middle is the joint zone. When finishing his turn, the speaker moves the hands to the joint zone.

The study also analyzes 137 questions in the material, both yes/no questions and wh-questions to determine what elements in tactile sign language makes up for the lack of interrogative facial expression as in sign language received visually. Here the findings were along the lines of the results from the study by Collins and Petronio.

To summarize, the topics that have received special focus in the research on tactile sign language I have mentioned here are:
- Hand arrangements
- Turn taking
- Marking of questions
- Feedback
- Transformation of non-manual grammatical elements
- Effectiveness (how fast and accurate) – and where it fails

All the researchers, whose work I have discussed express the need for further research and development work in the field of tactile sign language, and deafblind communication in general.

Fingerspelling

There have been few studies so far on fingerspelling. One of them is:
Charlotte M. Reed, Lorraine A. Delhorne, Nathaniel I. Durlach (MIT) and Susan D. Fischer (NTID): "*A study of tactual and visual reception of finger spelling*", Journal of Speech and Hearing Research, p. 786-797, USA, 1990.

The purpose of the study was to examine the ability of experienced deafblind subjects to receive finger spelled materials, including sentences and connected text through the tactile sense. A parallel study of the reception of finger spelling through the visual sense was also conducted using sighted deaf subjects. Accuracy of reception was examined as a function of rate of presentation.

In the tactile study rates were limited to those that could be produced naturally by an experienced interpreter. In the tactile reception of fingerspelling, the hand (or hands) of the receiver is placed on the hand of the sender to monitor the hand shapes and movements associated with the letters of a manual alphabet.

The subjects of this study were five deafblind individuals who were highly experienced in the tactual reception of the American One-Hand Manual Alphabet, using it for 10-40 years. A certified interpreter fingerspelled directly into their palms or the deafblind wrapped their fingers and palm around the side and back of the interpreter's hand. The subjects responded orally. There were lists of sentences, some representative of everyday conversation, and some more difficult. This lists were fingerspelled at various rates ranging from "slow" to "very fast".

Results:
Concerning the everyday sentences, the subjects scored 80-100%, but lower for the more difficult sentences. There was also a tendency for a gradual decrease in performance with increasing presentation rate.

In general, the reception of tactile fingerspelling appears to be accurate at normal rates of presentation that are considered to be comfortable for the fingerspeller (i.e. roughly five letters).

The results with sped-up fingerspelling suggests that sighted deaf subjects can understand substantial amounts of information at rates as high as two or three times normal fingerspelling rates!

How to deal with the words when using a manual then? Is it more like speaking or more like writing, which are quite different! Live Fuglesang of Norway did two studies on this in 1987 and 1988, exploring aspects of using the Norwegian two-handed alphabet in communication with the deafblind:

- Live Fuglesang: "*Kommunikasjon med døvblinde. Kan jeg bruke en av døvblindes viktigste taktil-kinetiske kommunikasjonsformer, to-hånds alfabetet, på talespråkets premisser?*", Universitetet i Oslo, 1987.

- Live Fuglesang: "*Kommunikasjon med døvblinde. Non-verbale aspekter ved bruk av to-hånds alfabetet?*", Universitetet i Oslo, 1988.

Other Relevant Studies

Live Fuglesang, Norway and Ole E. Mortensen, Denmark: ***A survey of 78 deafblind persons from 11 countries on their experience of their transition to tactile mode*** with regards to areas such as

- the physical contact with strangers that is necessary
- the lack of speed using a new method
- the accuracy of the method
- how hard and exhausting it is to use
- how difficult it is to learn

We did this survey for a plenary presentation at the European conference on deafblindness in 1997. It was not a scientific approach. This is straight forward answers from the deafblind persons who were willing to participate. For those who answered, it is representative, but probably not for the whole deafblind population in Europe! On the other hand, we have not seen a survey like this done before. This could be a small step further towards getting to know this area better.

Tadoma is a very rarely used method of communication, but it has been well studied and documented by Charlotte Reed and colleagues at MIT. In this method the deafblind person holds his hand on the face and neck of the talker. By feeling the movement of the mouth and the jaw, feeling the air from the mouth and the vibrations on the neck and so on, normal speech can be received through the sense of touch. As far as we know, only very few persons in the world are using the Tadoma method today. About 20 people in USA and maybe the same number in the rest of the world, according to Charlotte Reed's own estimate.

Although there is some discussion about this, the method is generally believed to have been developed by a Norwegian teacher at the end of the 19th century. Around 1920 two children called Tad and Oma were the first to be trained successfully in this method in the USA, and the method was named after them.

Tadoma can be a fairly accurate method of speech perception. Reception of about 40 % of isolated words, and about 80% of sentences can be achieved by experienced users. But the implications of having to put your hands on the face of the person who speaks, may be an important reason for not being more widely spread.

RALPH is short for **R**obotic **Alph**abet **H**and. It is an artificial hand the size of a ten-year-old that is capable of forming the letters of the International manual alphabet on the basis of electronic input. According to one of its inventors, David L. Jaffe, it may be used in situations like:

- Person-to-person communication using a small keyboard and display connected to Ralph. This works when the two communicators are in physical proximity to each other.

- Person-to-person communication via modem (or Internet). The telephone-based alternative would require a text telephone or computer/modem at one end and RALPH on the other end.

- Reading email - as a "display" device for a computer.

- With TV - the serial output from a closed-caption device would drive Ralph.

- Telephone answering machine - a device would record TDD or modem messages for later playback.

- In a classroom, conference, or courtroom situation. A stenographer would translate the conversation into text which would be displayed on Ralph.

- Text-to-fingerspelling. A scanner/computer with OCR capabilities could convert printed material to fingerspelling.

- Speech-to-fingerspelling. Speech recognition software could convert spoken words to fingerspelling.

Its top speed is four signs per second, but the speed may be slowed down by including longer intervals when going from one letter to the next. RALPH does not go to a neutral position between each letter, but has been programmed to move smoothly from one letter to the next. The hand has been tested with very good results by deafblind people. It does take a little training, however, to learn RALPH's accent, so to speak. The letters are not produced exactly the way a human does.

However, it is not in mass production yet due to problems with finding a company that will manufacture and distribute it. The inventors are employed at a government research institution and are not allowed to do this themselves. I have been in contact with the project leader David L. Jaffe at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Rehabilitation Research and Development Center in California (e-mail: jaffe@roses.stanford.edu). He is very interested in hearing from anyone at this symposium who is interested in RALPH.

Computer recognition of sign language

Computer recognition of sign language is a relatively new area of research. It takes place in different places in the world, and is at a stage where new developments and breakthroughs occur or may occur constantly. Therefore the best way to keep informed is through the Internet. One place to start is this: http://www.cse.unsw.edu.au/~waleed/gsl-rec/index.html

The purpose of this research is developing ways of interacting with the computer using sign language. This may be the basis for – for instance the development of automatic translation to and from sign language in the future. There are two basically different ways of registration of the signs. One is where the signer wears an electronic glove that is connected to the computer, and that registers the movements, hand shapes etc. The other is registration of the signs using a video camera.

Thad Starner, Joshua Weaver and Alex Pentland: "*Real-Time American Sign Language Recognition Using Desk and Wearable Computer Based Video*", MIT Media Laboratory Perceptual Computing Section Technical Report no. 466, Boston, USA.
Some of the most promising results are reached by Thad Starner, Joshua Weaver and Alex Pentland at MIT in Boston using a video camera. They have developed a setup that is capable of recognising sentences of ASL with between 92 and 98% accuracy (depending on where the camera is situated). This test used a 40 word lexicon, that is the computer was able to recognise 40 different signs, that when put together randomly following the word order "personal pronoun, verb, noun, adjective, (the same) personal pronoun" they would form coherent sentences.

The 40 words were:

Part of speech	**vocabulary *(signs)***
pronoun	I, you, he, we, you (pl), they
verb	want, like, lose, don't want, don't like, love, pack, hit, loan
noun	box, car, book, table, paper, pants, bicycle, bottle, can, wristwatch, umbrella, coat, pencil, shoes, food, magazine, fish, mouse, pill, bowl
adjective	red, brown, black, gray, yellow

This study shows that recognition of sentences of this kind is possible, depending on the size of the vocabulary. However, one important point is that the "ASL" used in this test consisted only of the signs. Other grammatical features such as pointing to objects or persons that are "stored" in the signing space, or facial expressions were not included. A very complex issue will be to recognise correctly non-manual grammatical elements that add meaning to the signs.

Computer sign language recognition is based on the same principle as computer recognition of speech and writing and has much to do with the techniques in "fuzzy logic" and "neural networks", where the software is capable of learning as it works.

Holistic and interactive communication

As you have heard from Riihta Laahtinen during this symposium, there is a very interesting project going on in Finland on holistic and interactive communication.

Two Nordic projects

Two projects are going to be started in the Nordic countries. One is a Ph.D. study of Norwegian tactile sign language by Eli Raanes, who is teacher and head of the education of sign language interpreters in Norway.

The other is a joint venture between all the Nordic countries. We have applied for app. £260.000 for a three year project in two phases that should provide the answers to the following questions:

- Which communication methods and forms are used by people with acquired deafblindness in the Nordic countries?
- Which possibilities and limitations does the individual method provide?
- How does the transition from one communication method to another take place?
- How do deafblind people experience this transition?

First phase is a questionnaire survey covering all deafblind people in the Nordic countries, and the second phase is an interview survey following up on the first one and providing more in depth answers. The decision about the grant will be made in September. The head of the project is Professor Claes Möller, a Swedish audiologist who is very much involved in research on Usher syndrome.

Communication speed and accuracy

Finally I would like to say a few words about one aspect that these studies of deafblind communication has made clear – effectiveness of different tactile methods, measured as speed compared to accuracy.

According to Charlotte Reed and colleagues the natural speed of tactile communication – Tadoma, fingerspelling and sign language – ranges from one fourth to three fourths that of normal speech and visually received sign language. (The normal communication speed of speech and visually received sign language is the same with regards to the time that it takes in the two codes to transfer the same information, for instance the contents of a sentence.)

The slowest speed but most accurate reception was obtained in fingerspelling with near perfect reception at a natural speed approximately one fourth of that of normal speech and sign language.

For both the use of Tadoma and tactile sign language the average score is around 80% reception, at a speed of approximately three fourths of normal speech and visually received sign language.

It should be stressed that these figures are *averages* from the results obtained in the different studies. Individual users of these methods may accomplish results different from these. They are merely examples to show the correlation between speed and accuracy.

Conclusion

Research and development work like the studies I have mentioned here is crucial for the continuing work to build a base of knowledge, or theoretical framework regarding the communication of people with acquired deafblindness. And it is just as important to make the work that has been carried out accessible to as many people as possible, for instance by distributing and – if possible and necessary – translating it. And this is absolutely essential for the professional level and expertise of interpreters and educators of interpreters, who must be able to communicate fluently in the preferred code and mode of the deafblind person. As one of the deafblind respondents wrote in a comment to the survey that Live Fuglesang and I did in 1997:

> *"For any deafblind person being able to fluently communicate, is the doorway to life itself, and as individuals we need to have a choice in the communication methods that suit us best as individuals."*

INTERPRETING THE ENVIRONMENT

Monica Hermansson (Sweden)

Monica Hermansson has been a Sign Language Interpreter and Deafblind Interpreter for 15 years. She is a partner in a private company together with seven interpreters and is Chair of the National Association for Sign Language Interpreters.

Visual interpretation

In Sweden we have a combined education for sign language interpreters and deafblind interpreters. Our view is that deafblind interpretation consists of three tasks:

- Guiding
- Giving visual information
- Language interpretation

Language interpretation can be a translation between two languages (Sign language and Swedish) or between two modalities of Swedish (manual alphabet and spoken Swedish).
The most difficult part is to give the visual information! I will talk about some of the difficulties I have met during my time as an interpreter. Sometimes it's difficult to know if we have problems with the technical part of the description or if we have problems of an ethical nature! We don't have to decide that now but I want you to be aware of this question while listening to me. I mean that this is the most difficult part because the interpreter needs a lot of knowledge to be able to describe something in an interesting way. You also have to give from yourself when relaying this information and you have to share your own values and experiences. Of course it's important for the deafblind person I interpret for to be aware of the fact that interpreters can "colour" the description. Is it possible to give a totally neutral description? I don't think so, but if it is possible I think this description would be boring!

One problem I have met is that we, as seeing people, consider some things so natural we don't think to describe them! I have one example from a conference where a man from South Africa participated. He had a Dutch name so for me it was so obvious that he was white! I never gave this information and neither did my colleague. When we went home we talked about this man and when I mentioned his sensitive type of skin the deafblind person reacted, "What.. Wasn't he black??"

It is more convenient to give the visual information to a person who uses a tactile method! You don´t have to embarrass people around you while giving the information, for example if someone falls asleep during a meeting you don´t want to embarrass him by giving this information in a loud voice. The group of deafblind people who receive information aurally will often get less information because the reason mentioned above!
That is to say that the interpreter may leave out embarrassing information.

As interpreters I think we often try to give too much information. Sometimes the deafblind person has to rest. For example if he/she attends a meeting, during the break they need to relax for a while. Sometimes it´s more "convenient " for the interpreter to describe the environment rather than to chat with the deafblind person! But of course the deafblind person himself has a responsibility to "guide" the interpreter and tell her what kind of information he wants and when he doesn`t want this information!

INTERPRETING THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT FOR DEAFBLIND PEOPLE

Tony Kirk (UK)

Tony Kirk has worked for Sense for the past 15 years. During this time he has qualified as a teacher of people with multi-sensory impairment. Most of his work has been with adults with a congenital loss. During the last three years, he has been working as a Special Projects Manager, developing new services, mainly for those with an acquired impairment.

The role of the 'interpreter' in any situation is critical. They will be the eyes and ears of the deafblind person and will need to transfer vast amounts of information to that person. In this presentation I have focused on the adaptations to the environment which will enable the deafblind person to function more effectively. This will enable the person to be more self sufficient, with the environment being supportive, rather than (as usually happens) providing barriers.

I believe that how well a person is able to cope in any given situation, or environment is determined largely by the amount of information they are able to gain from it.

Key considerations in designing any environment are:

I. The use of contrast
II. Using surfaces which avoid glare
III. Choosing appropriate background colours
IV. The planning of the space
V. The number and quality of the clues which are provided
VI. The choosing of appropriate environmental aids which lend support and enable the person to function more independently.

To look at these in more detail. When considering contrast we work from the principle that where two surfaces meet they will be of a different colour or shade. This will help the person define the boundary between those edges, and so enhance any residual vision.This can be applied at all levels and not just related to the environment.

For example a dark drink is made in a light coloured cup which has a dark handle. This can be placed on a dark work surface, mat, or tray. When washing up, the cup will be seen best in a dark sink or bowl. The person will find the taps better if they are light, with dark handles. From this you can see the thought process which needs to be applied to designing the most supportive environments.

I would now like to describe how the principles have been applied to a home for older people. Walls which touch are different colours. This enables the person to orientate themselves and find the corner of the room. The doors clearly stand out from the wall surfaces with well defined edges. In one case we have used matt black to indicate a door frame. This has been applied throughout the building. The doors are strong colours which reflect the colour of the room inside. All rooms in the same area use different colours. The ceilings are painted white to reflect as much light as possible downwards. One mistake we made was in the design of the lift. This was chosen because it has a spoken message during its operation. Unfortunately the back wall is the same colour as the door, so that when it opens you cannot tell the difference. The door closures were chosen because they allow you to leave the door in any position and will not trap the fingers on the hinge side.

The ground floor of the building is a different colour to enable the person to have more information about which floor they are on. How often are people confused by coming out if the lift at the wrong floor, with no indication as to where they are.

Edges where two walls meet are painted a different colour. This enables the person to find that edge. The door handles are in contrast to the door and are clearly visible. The same idea has been applied to the electrical fittings which contrast with the walls. The walls have a defined lower edge where they meet the carpet.

Inside each room the same principles have been applied with furniture which stands out from the walls, coloured tops to the units and plain contrasting bed linen which is visible against the carpet. The corners of the room are defined by the contrasting colours.

One of the major difficulties that a visually impaired person faces is that of glare from a polished surface. This can destroy much of the visual information that is available in a room. So, for example, what is on the work surface disappears because of the light from the window. This can easily be avoided by careful seating of the deafblind person, or by using a non-reflective surface on which to work.

Overall glare can be reduced by a wide variety of measures. Matt paint surfaces can be used. Wall tiles are available in a range of matt colours. These are particularly useful in the bathroom area. Kitchen sinks come in a range of colours these days, so stainless steel can be avoided. To reduce glare and enhance the contrast, work surfaces need to be chosen with care. Avoid any mottled surface as these can cause a severe visual disturbance. Lighting plays an important part in how well a person can cope. Natural light has to be controllable. Uplighters are used to reflect light and are important in reducing glare. To make it possible to control the levels of light, task lighting is used. This allows the lighting of individual areas to meet the specific needs of the person.

As I said earlier colours are used to signify specific areas. So corridors on each floor are different colours, and each bedroom is personalised. The strong door colours reflect the interior, and a range of different indicators are attached to the door, depending on the needs of the user. Rooms are given specific smells, again enabling the person to know where they are. Textural clues are used. Carpets are laid with the pile in a different direction in doorways, enabling those without shoes to know a doorway is there. These clues can be applied to the doors, walls or floors. A range of sound clues are also used.

Wind chimes, placed behind the door will make a noise when it is opened. This will indicate the room. Talking sound posts can be placed around a building to give information.

A range of door clues are used, which are both two and three dimensional. Raised images are created to form one type of tactile image.

There are a wide range of environmental aids which can be incorporated into any building. Warning systems, including doorbells and fire alarms, need to be adapted to be both tactile and visual. This includes the use of strong beacons to give a visual dimension, and a vibrating pager relays that information to the user. The use of a text phone enables some people to access the system. Loop systems, including the 'T' piece on the hearing aid, enable sounds to be fed into the aid direct. Good quality systems are needed to make the best of the available sound.

Outside the home a range of clues are used. Marker posts can give a deafblind person the opportunity to explore an area. This could be helped by the use of strong scented plants to indicate specific areas. In the UK local authorities use tactile paving to indicate where road crossings are. This can be linked to sound and tactile clues on pedestrian crossings. Some are now available which have a vibrating pad to indicate when it is safe to cross.
Auditory clues can be added to a bus stop to indicate which bus is coming. Tactile maps can be created to give information, such as the one produced for our workshop, to help orientate a new person at work. These have been produced for many public buildings, including churches, museums etc. Tape guides have also been produced.

I hope the information given here will help the understanding of the need to create appropriate environments to enable the deafblind person to make the most of the information available. Our aim should be to encourage independence, not dependence. As I said at the start, the role of the support person/interpreter is critical in the process of transferring information, but is only part of the answer.

HOLISTIC AND INTERACTIVE COMMUNICATION METHODS

Riitta Lahtinen (Finland)

Riitta Lahtinen has worked with deafblind people for 18 years and is currently working in Holistic and Interactive Communication with Acquired Deafblind People. She is also studying as a Mobility & Low Vision Teacher, focusing on the needs of deafblind people. She has been co-ordinator in planning teaching materials for the deaf at the Finnish Deaf Association for five years. She is a communication teacher for Deafblind and gives courses at the Deaf Highschool for deafblind, family members, interpreters and other professionals. She has recently received a research grant to carry out her PhD work on Holistic Communication strategies in the area of Acquired Deafblind People.

Aims of the Research

- To examine the strategies and theoretical models of the function of language for improving communication for acquired deafblind people, family members and Interpreters.
- To analyse and identify how these different methods and techniques can be applied to improve the quality of communication.
- To identify the most common methods to describe their own emotional feelings, interpret environmental information and non-verbal signals to deafblind persons through touch.
- To produce articles, videos and teaching materials during the research.

Methods

Interviewing, video-recording and producing questionnaires in European countries.

Abstract

This research work was initially aimed at acquired deafblind groups of people and family members. However, it appears that these communication methods can be adapted for other groups also. Furthermore, the importance of interpreting body language, gestures and other non-verbal communication methods, assist couples in improving their relationships together and with other people. These same techniques can assist professionals, interpreters and guides who are working with visually impaired, Usher and other sensory impaired groups.

Family members and interpreters need information on how the progressive loss of hearing and vision will affect their quality of communication, so they can choose the most suitable methods to save their energy and to keep the quality of conversation when walking, traveling, or doing everyday things together with their partners.

'Holistic communication' in my presentation means being able to identify the whole interpreting situation and the elements involved through the whole process. When there are at least two or more, they work together and react to the elements of both their internal (past experiences etc.) and external (environment) to the place and objects around them, which is known as orientating to the context of the situation.

'Interactive' means deafblind person and interpreter-guide will be sending and receiving messages all the time. This also applies when there does not appear to be any movement or 'active' interpreting. Guiding in itself, is one way to interpret the environment for the deafblind person. This means that our body is actively moving around and so will be sending messages

through the muscles of the whole body (e.g. steps, feedback to conversation, stopping, starting etc.).

My research work started about eight years ago when meeting couples where one partner has a dual-sensory impairment. During the conversations and observations, I started to collect data on how they solved communication problems in their everyday activities together. I was very interested in those couples who seem to cope very well in different kinds of situations during the day, and was interested to know what methods they were using. At the same time I noticed that in my interpreting work, there appeared to be more "quick messages" in situations with the deafblind person, which we did not have to agree before hand. The messages appeared to be spontaneous and automatic. So, are there some elements of interpreting that deafblind people are able to understand in the appropriate context? Can we create a way to communicate a new situation?

I noticed that body movements were always there in the interpreteing situation, working either with totally deafblind (hands on signing), hard of hearing deafblind (hearing aid users with loop system), or deaf deafblind (visual frame signing) persons. By analysing some of these well-functioning methods of transmitting and receiving non-verbal information, I noticed some of these elements were either connected to each other, or were not taken either from the spoken or sign languages at all.

My first article, which includes a case study, focuses on and analyses the body feedback methods and confirmation systems. For example if we take the word "yes", we move our head using a "nodding" movement (up and down). Taking those same body motion further, we can apply the same movement to our hand or finger, by tapping on the persons arm or hand. This same motion can be further recognised through using our body movements like hips/or shoulders.

By analysing how each others bodies are moving and responding, even when we are talking or signing makes us realise that we use our body movements "unconsciously", to respond to others. I use here the term 'Haptic System', when we are reading or making comments through our bodies. The Haptic system includes our tactile information of our environment (active, passive), our kinesthetic movements, and how we can use our personal space when communicating with deafblind people. When we are interpreting for deafblind people, each interpreter has his own personality, so it is very important that we start to understand our way to use touch as a communication tool, and to identify what elements are involved and how the other person interprets it.

One specific area I am focusing on, is "kinesthetic interpreting", using just our body movements, such as a finger, hand or the whole body, e.g;

- hand movements when describing a table to the deafblind using their back
- hand movement when describing a scene (a picture) to the deafblind using their back
- using body movement in a painting exhibition to create the picture (e.g. size of the picture, the position of the people in the picture in relation to each other).

Conclusion

The aim of the work is to identify methods and techniques of giving information safely and quickly, and being able to save energy from both partners viewpoint. At the same time to ensure that the information is of a good quality, so the deafblind person can be more actively involved in social circumstances. Deafblind people need to be involved at an equal level in this process of finding the most suitable methods and techniques. Teaching and training of both partners, deafblind and interpreter-guides, needs to be encouraged, by starting to analyse their own processes such as: where, how and when to use touch i.e. haptic and body methods in a respected way.

HANDS-ON SIGNING - FROM THE GRASSROOTS TO AN ACCEPTED SYSTEM?

Frouke Schouwstra (The Netherlands)

Frouuke's professional background is in education and she has taught in secondary and higher education. Since 1990, she has worked as a trainer at Integraal – a centre providing courses for people in a changing society. At Integraal, Frouke has responsibility for courses for everybody in the field of deafness - from suddenly deafened adults to parents of deaf children and deafblind people and their guides.

Introduction

This is an overview of our work and experiences with hands-on signing at our institute - INTEGRAAL. I want to share these experiences with you, because I think sharing means progress and progress is needed in the field of education of interpreters for deafblind people. I think we are in Holland in a very interesting period when looking at developments around interpreting for the deaf and around the emancipation of deafblind people and therefore around interpreting for deafblind people too. Deaf people's emancipation is of a somewhat earlier date and therefore the evolution of the education of interpreters is more advanced. The education has been upgraded to university level for one and a half years now and in this program there will be also three modules on interpreting for the deafblind . This means that the tempo in developing the education in interpreting for the deafblind is faster than it has ever been for the deaf.

First I will say something about myself so that you know from which point of view I am talking. Then I will focus on the work done by my colleague and I on behalf of deafblind people and tell you about our experiences with hands-on signing, from the beginning to the period of development, the difficulties, the pros and cons, the results until now and the questions which have arisen. On some of these questions we may have answers, but I think it very good to discuss them with others.

As already mentioned I am working as a trainer at what is now called INTEGRAAL, an institute which develops and organizes training and courses for adults. The main theme in our Institute is learning how to cope with changes, training people to discover their talents and possibilities and how they best handle changes in themselves and in society.

My work as a trainer in this institute (which formerly started as a folk high school) focuses on everybody in the field of hearing-loss and deafness. I am responsible for training people who became suddenly deaf, helping them to find their way in their new silent world, teaching them signed Dutch and Dutch Sign Language (DSL), and for training parents of deaf children around educational questions and problems.

I train deaf people who, for example, want to professionalise their organisations. Also we teach chefs and workers in factories, offices and other companies how to communicate and to deal with deaf employees and colleagues. My Institute has been training guides for deafblind people on behalf of the Stichting Doofblinden for a long time. I have been responsible for this work for a year now. The development of curricula for signed Dutch, DSL, and, together with my deaf colleagues, hands-on signing is also one of my tasks.

For years we have been organizing weeks for deafblind people in which we create the opportunity for them to do things which are not, let's say, self-evident for them. These weeks include activities such as horseback riding, swimming, skating, ballroom dancing, tandem cycling, playing African drums, practicing self-defence, and so on. Creating these programs and carrying them out is one of my tasks.

Now I want to tell you about how we came to know about hands-on signing, what we did with this knowledge, how this was received and what the results are so far. Because the University of Utrecht is working with our material in their program for sign language interpreters (of which interpreting for deafblind people is a part), I also want to say some thing about interpreting and hands-on signing - the possibilities and the impossibilities for using it in interpreting situations.

Hands-On Signing

I use this term "hands on signing" rather than "tactile sign language" because I think it very important to point out the difference between a language like Dutch Sign Language and a communication-system like Signed Dutch. You cannot speak about hands-on signing as a language. It is a system, a communication system.

Many elements in hands-on signing are constructed or arranged, after analyzing them. Why this is so may be obvious, given the fact that a visual language is being or has been adapted to be used by people who cannot see or whose eyesight is minimal. Lately it is also used by deafblind people who were not born deaf and/or by people who were born blind so that they never had the possibility to see sign language. Certain grammatical elements in sign language are not adaptable for use when holding hands and the different expressions of the face as a linguistic element is evidently also a problem.

But let us start at the beginning. I think it was in 1988 when I attended a course for guiding deafblind people. In this training deafblind people together with experienced guides are the teachers. They guide the new guides into the world of deafblindness, teach them how to guide, how to communicate, how to interpret the environment and things that happen around them also. I think it will be clear to you how emancipating these courses have been for deafblind people themselves. In this particular training, in which I participated (not to become a guide but to broaden my professional knowledge), one of the teachers was a man, Mr. Bathoorn. He was born deaf and later on became blind.

He was there with a guide who knew Dutch Sign Language and for me he was the first person I saw using hands-on signing together with this guide. It was a revelation! We were learning to use the signed alphabet in the hand and during breaks he sat there using his own language in an adapted way and communicating so smoothly, fast and easily.
Later on I saw him together with his deaf-born wife, and this communication was smoother still because they had been married a very long time.

The next time I met him was at a local Deaf club. The president of the club was speaking in DSL and this speech was translated into hands-on signing by one of Mr. Bathoorn's deaf friends. Seeing him giving feedback in a very lively way made clear that the whole speech was translated very carefully. In the meantime my deaf colleague had a very similar experience. After 20 years she met an old school friend with whom she formerly (secretly) used DSL. The friend was not fully deaf but nevertheless had used Sign Language at school. Now she had also become blind. My colleague, not knowing this and being very emotional about seeing her back as a teacher on a course for guides of deafblind people, said something about old times and using Sign Language together.

Before they knew it they were communicating 'in the old-fashioned way', using their hands, but now linked together. Other people watched what happened, were amazed at the smoothness and the tempo in which this communication took place (just like me with Mr. Bathoorn), got curious and asked for a demonstration the next day. The other deafblind teachers were informed and asked to join in the demonstration. Some of them, also deaf-born, also remembering Sign Language, were rather reluctant.They remembered their days at Deaf school when it was forbidden to sign! Speech was seen as important, signing as only 'primitive' in their days.

Because of their later acquired blindness, some of them were not aware of the changes that had taken place in educating deaf children, and in attitudes towards sign language. They simply missed this change in attitude of the hearing world towards sign language as being a full and rich language and not a primitive system of hand-signs. There was a big information-gap but during this particular training this gap was quickly filled and many long and complicated discussions took place.

At last everybody agreed about the demonstration by Rietje and Tineke (my colleague). They sat in a circle, every deafblind person with a guide, and they took over what Rietje and Tineke showed. Rietje and Tineke used typical signs from the school they had been to, other deafblind people quickly overcame their reluctance and wanted to use their own signs! They remembered them very well, and what started was a kind of laboratory in which everybody participated and the first choices were made: *"This sign you can feel better than that one!" "What does it matter where it comes from, you are right, let us use this sign from Groningen and that sign from Amsterdam".* It was a remarkable training and afterwards we discussed things very seriously. Tineke told me about what happened, I told her about my fascination for what I saw with Mr. Bathoorn.

We agreed it was worth exploring further and trying to find a way to give deafblind people and their guides the opportunity to learn this technique. We contacted some deafblind persons besides Mr. Bathoorn and Rietje and sat down together, to work things out. After a while another deaf colleague, a sign language interpreter who also worked as a guide for deafblind people and Jan Fox who was deafblind made the first booklet about hands-on signing. I have the book here, and, when I look at it now, I must admit that it was really just a booklet, a very small and primitive start. We could do no more at that time given the lack of money and time. Jan Fox who co-operated very enthusiastically was late deafblind, but he loved hands-on signing! Sadly, he died a few years ago.

The first course in "4-hands-signing", as we call it, was given and the reactions were very, very positive; even, from deafblind persons not born deaf. What is the reason for this? We think hands-on signing is a more complete way of communicating. Emotions are much better communicated than by writing in the hand. If you are nervous, it is felt. Are you making a joke, laughing, being mad, impatient? Nothing is hidden. You want to communicate those emotions to others, you can put intention and intensity in signing very well. Also signing can be much quicker than spelling in the hand. Whether this is fully true in every interpreting situation, I'm not sure yet. Let's come back to that later.

For three years now we have organized courses for deafblind people and their guides in which hands-on signing is learned and practiced. Those courses are very successful and motivating. There are three levels in these courses developed now and we want to go on further. By making this first booklet and by giving these courses, we met a range of problems and interesting questions, and until now we are busy trying to solve them and find the answers with enthusiasm.

Let me now give you an overview of the main problems and questions, after that I will comment on them:

Problems

- you cannot learn 4-hands signing from a book,
- most deafblind people cannot learn 4-hands signing from a video-film,
- describing the signs in spoken/written language is known to be very inadequate,
- learning 4-hands signing without knowing "normal DSL" or Signed Dutch is extra difficult for both deafblind people and guides,
- it is important for both deafblind people who are not deaf-born and for hearing guides to know something about pre-lingual Deafness, Deaf culture, sign languages and the differences between sign systems and sign languages; the more so because there are also quite a lot of deaf people who are guides for deafblind people,
- one course during one (long) weekend is not enough. People ask for a follow-up,

- even if you develop three courses (as we have done until now), there is a limitation as to the amount of signs which can be learned. People ask for more,

- making materials for the courses and to use for home practicing is very intensive and requires a lot of knowledge both in using Sign Language and on the linguistic level,

- choosing which signs are important to learn is very difficult. Some criteria can be found easily, but the more people learn and use it, the more they want to know,

- the choice about which sign should be used best for a connotation costs a lot of time and tact. Who determines what?

- how should one change some signs of the Dutch Sign Language to be felt better,

- should a standard "tactile signed system" be developed, and by whom?

- if you are recording hands-on signing on video, what is the best technique as to light, point of view, tempo etc,

- the more videos you make the more difficult it is to use them as a kind of dictionary - CD-ROM may be better,

- how adequate this communication system may be for interpreting more complicated matters, we don't exactly know yet.

Well, this list seems long enough for now. Many of these items would be solved easily if money was available; so lobbying, campaigning and clustering energy and skills is absolutely necessary.

Let's have a closer look at least at the most important of them. In doing so I will cluster some points.

The first three items are obvious I think. As far as the second one is concerned the only way to learn and practice for a deafblind person is together with a guide or a family member. As a result of our courses in Holland, small mixed groups have started to practice regularly - a very positive situation, both for learning and for socializing.

If people have learned Signed Dutch or DSL before they start, we notice that learning goes easier. The trainer can refer to grammatical items such as localization and classifiers. For this reason we organized a training for experienced guides learning basics about signing. People were very enthusiastic and the main thing you heard all the time was '…now I understand why this or that is so important'!

The conclusion must be a standard basic training in signing for at least hearing guides before they are going to learn hands on signing. (For people who are studying to be an interpreter there is no such problem of course). Knowledge about pre-lingual deafness should be part of this training too. Also there should be material in Braille and other formats to give deafblind people who are interested in learning hands-on signing an introduction to sign language, pre-lingual deafness etc. Until now the 4-hands signing courses are too short to include these topics. Discussions about which sign to choose and how to adapt certain signs would be easier, raise less emotions and therefore be shorter!
Contact between hearing and deaf guides would be easier, because the deaf guides always complain about the lack of knowledge about deafness of hearing guides. Communication would be easier too. This of course is especially important in our specific activities for groups of deafblind people. The results of this first basic training we gave were proof for all these elements.

As for the materials, our experiences in working as a team with a small group of deafblind people (of whom some should be "native signers"), a deaf sign-language trainer and a (hearing) linguistically skilled trainer are very positive. We think this way of working "from the grassroots" is the only justifiable way to handle the development of a communication system based on a language which is the "possession" of a group of people; the only way to pay respect to deafblind people and to sign language and their users.

In searching how to adapt a sign to be better felt, native signers are especially important as they can point out very easily if an adaptation "feels good" or if it is contrary to certain (until now) unwritten motorial "laws" in signing. On the question of choosing between different signs from different regions, I would say that "feeling good" is more important than everything else. I know that there is the idea to follow the standardization, which is due to be created in DSL but dealing with the development of a system, I would say we could feel free to choose in favour of those signs that are especially fit for deafblind people.

As for a standard tactile-sign-system, maybe it would be adequate to have something like that in the future, especially for interpreters. I think we are doing some of that already by the way we are working, without having the time or the money to do this "on purpose". Working together with sign language interpreters who are especially interested in interpreting for deafblind people would be a proper thing to do. We are open to discussions on this.

Interpreting in hands-on signing certainly is possible, as we have seen in our groups. It requires a great deal of skill from the interpreter and is until now, as far as we know, mostly used between deaf-born deafblind people and deaf guides or hearing guides who are very good at 'common sign language', but more and more we see other deafblind guide combinations do so. Interesting to mention here is the combination of spelling in the hand and hands-on signing, which we see occurring more and more often between guides and deafblind people who know each other rather well. What you see is a wonderful rhythmic system of alternating four hands-communication with two-hands-signs while the hand in which you should spell stays free to receive words (for which for example there is no sign available at that moment) in between.

I am sure there are deafblind people who are willing to work with interpreters who want to specialize in hands-on signing to make sure their technique is adequate for as many situations as possible. I am convinced that this is the only way to develop these skills properly, just like we work in developing our material together with deafblind people who also teach with us in the courses we give. I really think we should cluster all the knowledge and expertise there is, at least on the national level, and, as far as I am concerned, also on the international level.

With this remark I almost have come to the end of my presentation. Our experiences with courses in hands-on signing show that this communication technique is interesting to learn not only for guides but for quite a lot of deafblind people too. They seem to prefer this way of communicating above spelling in the hand or at least ask for a combination of spelling and hands-on signing. Among them there are a great many deaf people who were not born deaf and even a few congenitally blind people. I think this means something for the program on educating interpreters and I really hope to go on co-operating further both with deafblind experts and with deaf and hearing teachers.

INTERPRETING FOR OLDER PEOPLE WITH ACQUIRED DEAFBLINDNESS

Sarah Greaves (UK)

Sarah Greaves has worked at Sense as Specialist Development Worker for two years. Her role involves developing service responses for people with a dual sensory impairment living in the community or supported environments. She is a qualified social worker and previously worked at the National Centre for Mental Health and Deafness and as a communication support worker with deaf students in colleges. Sarah is currently working for a PhD doing research on dual sensory impairment in older age

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Is anybody there?

Deafblind services have been developing with concerted support and commitment in Derbyshire in the UK since September 1997. County and city council social services departments, the health authority and Sense have joint funded a project worker and pilot services alongside input from several other local voluntary organisations. This project was initially aimed at identifying the individuals, their needs, and appropriate support and services for the group who experienced an acquired dual sensory impairment and who were over 60 years of age. One of the elements of service provision currently not well developed or accessed in this area, especially by older people, is that of interpreting. Part of the work of this project explored some of the reasons behind this and ways of moving forward.

> *"It became clear that, for many Deaf people, to have to rely on a friend, neighbour or relative to help out with interpreting support when required was an anathema; it implied that deaf people were incapable of taking care of their own affairs and because this type of interpreting assistance was provided on a voluntary basis, Deaf consumers felt unable to complain if dissatisfied with the service provided. In addition there was no guarantee that such an individual was performing the task adequately, far less than the 'interpreter' was aware of the rights of the client to expect impartiality and confidentiality".*
>
> (British Deaf Association project 1977)

This quote was said 20 years ago in relation to Deaf people, but it struck such a chord, echoing the sentiments of many of the deafblind people currently receiving contact. It is shocking to consider we could be so far behind that such a dated statement so accurately describes the experience of so many deafblind people.

Information Starvation

In order to put the issue of access to information and communication into some sort of perspective, the reading maximum, according to Kavanagh and Mattingley (1972), is estimated at 2,000 word per minute and the listening maximum is 400 words per minute. When we then look at the words per minute that a deafblind person can access, 60 is about the maximum in deafblind manual, less with block alphabet, the speed being restricted by interpreter production and deafblind person reception. In reality, most of the older deafblind people receive approximately 12–14 words per minute in various formats. This speed being restricted by their competence in using an alternative reception channel, a more symbolic communication system or repetition and rephrasing.

As the information generally available becomes more extensive and rich, the divide between the life experience of those with easy access and those dependent upon interpreted information will increase unless technology and techniques develop alongside. The rest of this paper will discuss the issues pertinent to older people accessing interpreters and give some recommendations for managing the debilitating impact on the lives of older people of such limited access to information and communication.

Older People

There are various factors experienced by older people which reduce their personal capacity to manage a dual sensory impairment:

- having fewer people around for support can result in older people prematurely loosing confidence with basic life activities, including communication.

- having limited access to positive peer group comparisons or help strategies, diminishes life opportunities.

- loosing contacts which have been gained over many years affects communication as familiarity of voice tone and conversation content cannot compensate for sensory impairment.

- fear of loosing familiar strategies or communication methods results in people (both the deafblind individual and family members) holding onto inappropriate methods.

- as family and friends die or drift away due to frustration and feelings of inadequacy, communication opportunities are reduced and people loose the techniques and content for interaction.

- any physical deterioration and the deaths of peers can be perceived as signs that the person themselves is dying. This may then result in conscious withdrawal and preparation for death.

Dual Sensory Impairment

For older people, who have gone through their whole lives as 'able bodied' and who may have held many of the negative stereotypes relating to impairment; to have to accept that they are now disabled is uncomfortable, it may be met with denial, or impairments are seen as a natural part of the ageing process, about which nothing can be done.

People tend to develop strategies to continue their lives with a first impairment, but cope less well with a second - partly because they have struggled enough already and because they do not have the other sense to then rely on to compensate or develop alternative strategies.

Sensory impairment is seen as a natural part of the ageing process and is therefore not challenged. Also there is a general reluctance or difficulty in overcoming the barriers to requesting or accessing support, including support for communication. Unlike interpreters for Deaf people, there is as yet no general acceptance of the need and right of access for older people to similar support.

Interpreting Methods - Case Studies

In Derbyshire the interpreting role has been explored with various deafblind people who use a range of different communication techniques.

'W' was accompanied attending hospital appointments where clear speech interpreting was used to re-state communication but with access to information gained through using familiar speech patterns, appropriate speed and location of delivery and re-phrasing. A relay system enabled 'W' to have two opportunities to pick up elements of communication. Accompanying 'W' to and from the appointment reduced his anxiety and discomfort created by the hospital transport service journey and provided an opportunity for him to tune into the interpreters speech. The powerlessness of the basic situation of coping with a health gatekeeper is compounded by the effects on communication of a combined sight and hearing impairment making it virtually

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impossible for an individual to be assertive in such a contact. The added role of advocate cannot be underestimated.

'E' was accompanied to a Front Room Peer Group meeting where speech relay was used to facilitate communication between two deafblind people. One of the most important areas identified by deafblind people is effective opportunities to get together with people who experience similar sight and hearing impairments. Without interpreting and technical aids to communication, interaction can be impossible. Such 'social' contacts can be justified given their potential to monitor and prompt a vulnerable group with changing needs, as well as lessening the impact of isolation and depression becoming too acute.

"It was lovely to chat with 'N', I don't usually see anyone during the day. When can I visit again?"

I was attending a Social Services review meeting concerning a deafblind manual user. One of only few staff at the centre usually communicated for her but none had any formal training. To the question 'Are you happy with what you do here?' – initially the response was "yes", but through additional prompting by the interpreter the response became:

"Is there a new programme? I'm not sure what the choices are so it's difficult to say what I would like to do - I don't really get involved with any particular activities at the moment…"

What had been a short, relatively meaningless, meeting in the past became much more involved. Issues were more fully explored and full communication of all contributions and discussion in deafblind manual required the meeting to be held at a slower pace in order for the deafblind person to access all the information and to contribute.

'M' was accompanied during a social work interview where deafblind block communication was used at the service users home. 'M' had recently begun to accept deafblind block but only after many years of refusal and reliance on speech with volume, clarity and familiarity. Her hearing had deteriorated so that she could no longer access information in this way. She is still not comfortable with block and finds it difficult to concentrate and to link touch to communication. An additional consideration here is the role of the interpreter in encouraging, supporting and to some extent teaching communication.

'B' has been provided with an interpreter during Day Centre activities. She has no hearing and limited residual sight in her left eye. At the age of 80 she has begun to learn some sign language but relies on a mixture of sign, written text, deafblind manual and objects of reference. In order to access the sessions at the day centre, multi-channel communication is used with the interpreter having to respond moment to moment depending upon the interaction. Interpreting has also been provided for this woman during hospital appointments

"My husband usually brings me and he refuses to write things down at the time – just explains it to me later. I feel so left out when he is discussing things with the Doctor about my eyes and I have to wait. Even then – I'm sure he misses things out."

'J' was supported in a residential home using visual frame adapted British Sign Language. She is a BSL user whose sight had begun to deteriorate. She had been resident in the home for 18 months following the death of her husband. The staff complained of problems in communicating with her and of her frustration. They claimed that she did not use any sort of formal communication system - only some gesture - and were apparently unaware that she used sign language.

During the interview, various issues within the home were discussed and questions were asked regarding the woman's preferences. Although BSL was her first language, it was necessary to adapt production and to request clarification of some of her communication. She was able to receive communication depending upon the light and speed of sign production. Conversely, her hand shapes and signs had become adapted through familiarity and home use as well as arthritis.

All the above older deafblind people had the following in common:
- no expectation of interpreter support

- limited if any understanding of the role of the interpreter as currently defined in terms of sign language interpreters
- non-standard communication needs that changed over time and situation
- communication needs which could be met partly through contact and relationship
- a need for someone to intervene on their behalf to control communication and even the quality of information so they could access proceedings
- interpreting in situations which are not currently valued or usual
- general support

Issues

There is currently no general acceptance of the need for interpreting for older people. This appears to be a product of the general value we give the contribution and participation by older people in society and the narrow role and communication techniques perceived as being the job of interpreters. Interpreting around speech, whether through lip speaking or clear relay, is not seen as necessary, putting older people at an automatic disadvantage in crucial situations where other groups would be expected to have full access to information. Family and friends continue to fill this role to whatever extent they can through duty, ignorance of alternative services or lack of available interpreters.

For those using a different communication system, such as deafblind manual, interpreting may occur, albeit on an ad hoc basis. These numbers continue to be small as there is a general lack of awareness by family and professionals of other communication techniques and so older people are not offered the opportunity to develop them. Possibly as a consequence of the lack of demand, there is also a lack of courses or professionals to teach deafblind people the communications skills they need. On top of basic communication skills, an understanding of how to use an interpreter and fundamentally some basic assertiveness training would all be available in an ideal world.

The limited numbers of adequately qualified interpreters continues to be a problem in the UK with this being compounded by the suspension of training. The broader, more complex role required to support older deafblind people in the scenarios outlined makes it essential that the professionals are adequately trained and supported to meet the presenting needs.

Some work has been undertaken around the impact of intergenerational contacts. Most interpreters are young and therefore, according to Gills and Coupland 1991, will consciously or subconsciously overaccommodate with grammatical and ideological simplification and use language codes which fuels an older person's helplessness, giving them a negative personal and social identity and perceived, actual and instant ageing.

Two basic logistical issues also act to make supporting this group more difficult. In small meetings where the pace can be controlled, clear voice relay is acceptable but can be problematic in larger meetings where groups of people may be gathered with similar needs or interpreting will interfere with the communication from the speaker. The varied needs within a group also have to be managed as there can be conflict when those requiring strict turn taking struggle to cope with contributions from those responding to written text.

Situations

Consultant hospital appointments require a dual role in an interpreter, where enabling clear communication is paramount but in order to do this, a certain amount of advocacy has to be included to offset the impact of the Doctor/patient power imbalance (Sidell p.124 1995). Monitoring understanding is crucial in these situations and may involve some questioning, prompting and re emphasis on the part of the interpreter.

Social services meetings are usually more flexible once interpreting has been introduced, but Social service departments are still not making interpreting available or changing meeting set up for all those who could benefit. Day care reviews are a similar scenario.

Peer group activities and outings rely on more generally trained staff to provide communication and mobility support. Volunteers are also widely used with this group. The quality of access to information therefore suffers as a result.

The difficulty of accessing seminars and open days has been mentioned in regards to the interference of some types of communication support on general proceedings. Ageist assumptions about whether older people would want to participate have been used to avoid addressing these issues.

Successful Communication

With interpreting with older people with acquired deafblindness, the impact on the quality of communication gained from a relationship should not be underestimated. Deaf interpreting is done mainly at a distance, whereas the acceptability and effectiveness of the close physical proximity and touch involved in much deafblind interpreting benefits from an established relationship, which in turn takes time to develop. It will always be difficult, if not impossible, for an older person to be faced with a new interpreter, whatever their skills, and to tune into their communication straight away.

Problems

Older people have many techniques that they will have perfected both subconsciously and consciously to avoid having to acknowledge their sight and hearing impairment. In order to ensure clear communication, the interpreter may have to actively check out understanding as the older person may be smiling and nodding without comprehension as part of their usual coping behaviour. Any other group would be standing up and waving for events to be halted and clarity obtained.

Relay interpreting and deafblind manual or block can all be slow methods of communication. The skills of the interpreter may be considerable, but the ability of the older person to follow the communication may require a steadier rate. The time spent interpreting information may also be lengthened if various alternative re-phrasings or methods have to be tried. All these issues will make it difficult for the individual and the interpreter to keep abreast of events.

The concentration of the older person may also be compromised through the effort required to pick up communication or other factors associated with old age or illness. Regular breaks will be required - or shorter meetings!

The Way Forward

In conclusion, there are currently many barriers to the full access to information by older people with an acquired dual sensory impairment. The use of effective interpreting can be seen as one way to overcome many of these problems, but in being 'effective' the interpreter will be required to take on more than what appears currently to be accepted as their role.

Restructuring, and even controlling, meetings, teaching and practising new communication systems, developing a relationship to support interaction and advocating for the individual during meetings all have to be included if communication is to be successful.

Making sure that those who can influence policy are aware of what needs to be done around clarifying the role, expanding the training and increasing the availability of interpreters for this group is paramount.

Raising the expectations of older people and enabling access to the systems for influencing change must also be pursued so they can demand their rights for themselves. The aim has to be to enable full and free choice, control over life and environments and maximisation of capabilities, experiences, wisdom and potential. No one ever said it was an easy job.

COMMUNICATION THROUGH TOUCH PROJECT

Sarah Reed (UK)

Sarah Reed has Usher herself and is a fluent BSL user coming from a Deaf family. Currently Research and Training Development Officer for the Communication through Touch Project at Sense where she has worked for eight years, Sarah previously worked with BSL users on the Usher in the Deaf Community project.

Introduction

The Communication through Touch Project which began in October 1996 started with a research project lasting 18 months followed by the current work on building curriculum and developments on training for those involved in the use of communication through touch. The research was funded by the Department of Health who are also supporting half of the funding for our current work along with Sense.

I will talk about the findings of the research project which has given us valuable insights into how Deaf people who use BSL adapt their communication when their sight is affected by a variety of eye diseases and how they are supported by their communicators.

I will follow this up with our current work which has been running for 14 months now, on developing curriculum and training for professionals, consumers and their families.

Research findings

The linguistic research which has confirmed some basic evidence on how best to communicate already exists in current information packages on Usher syndrome. However it has revealed many interesting insights and I want to tell you about one concept in the research which is of vital importance on communication through touch - the use of cues.

What are cues? Cues describe a method of communicating supplementary information which helps to enhance the receptive skills of the consumer and helps to promote effective communication. We have identified seven different classes of cues although this is only an initial set and there are likely to be other types. We aim to assist those involved in our pilot training programmes to work out the most effective cues for themselves and build an increasing dossier of cue classifications. We have described elsewhere the effectiveness of the different kinds of cues but here we will just identify them.

Our cue classifications are as follows:
- *Repetition:* Repetition of target item
- *Fingerspelling:* Addition of fingerspelling of first letter of the word corresponding to the sign (e.g. -e- + ELECTRICITY)
- *Semantic field:* Addition of e.g. PLACE before BRIGHTON, or NAME before signing a person's name sign
- *Synonym:* Providing more than one sign with the same meaning or fingerspelling a word as well as signing it (i.e. SUCCEED + WIN, or l-o-n-d-o-n + LONDON)
- *Association:* Often signs are manually identical but with different mouth pattern (e.g. CHALK, PENCIL). To distinguish these signs CHALK may be accompanied by the signs SCHOOL or WHITE
- *Attention shift:* a sign which would be out of the receiver's frame of vision is modified to draw the receivers attention to it (e.g. GROW-UP - the signer moves eye gaze to the hand and then follows the hand's movement with his eye gaze.

- *Location shift:* Information normally provided on the mouth is moved to the hand (e.g. BIG - PILE) This can also be seen with features such as negation which is moved to the hand from its usual location on the face.

Providing for the Needs of Oral Deaf with Visual Impairment

Our research found that those who are deaf or hard of hearing who were brought up orally but then subsequently develop visual impairment, experienced frustrations in communication as their deteriorating vision makes it more difficult for them to continue to depend on lip-reading as the main method of communication. In some cases the hearing loss becomes progressive and therefore they cannot rely on their hearing aids, such as those with Usher Type 3. Some of them have tried to learn Sign Language by attending Sign Language classes, like any hearing or Deaf student, but found it very difficult for the following reasons:

- they could not see the tutor well enough to learn signing
- they were unable to benefit from learning alongside other students in a class
- those who learned to sign could not communicate with their non-signing family members
- they were not aware of the possibilities of adapting Sign Language into 'hands on' signing

These two main areas from the research were incorporated into the next follow-up project which is about building curriculum and training development.

Building Curriculum and Training Development

Moving on to the current part of the Communication through Touch project, our first task was to put together a Consultative and Working Group of professionals and consumers with particular skills and expertise to look at how the work could progress to develop training in order to obtain a nationally recognised qualification in this method of communication.

We used existing materials from CACDP (the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People - an examining body setting standards of qualifications in communication). These materials covered Deaf and Deafblind Awareness; BSL Stage 1 and 2; National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) (which can be obtained through one's line of work), Level 3 in BSL; and Tutors' Policy. The Consultative and Working Group have investigated and introduced some additions and amendments to these materials.

In order to make the training as effective as possible, a pilot course of 15 hours length was devised, involving five oral Deaf/Hard of Hearing with visual impairment. Participating tutors are teaching BSL Stage I, either through close-up, visual frame signing or hands on. Both tutors and students are interviewed after lessons to obtain feedback on the lesson form and content and where problems arise, they are asked for suggestions as to how these can be overcome and improved.

Observers who are experienced BSL tutor trainers attend these sessions to provide an impartial assessment and to work with the tutor and student afterwards. Tutors are given the opportunity to rotate among the different students so that they can obtain insight into how to work with the range of needs and types of visual impairments. This will pinpoint areas where the tutors need further training and help develop accessible materials, new assessments and examinations as well as devising innovative and imaginative methods of learning for the student.

Professional Training Programme

We are also looking at the whole concept of a training programme for those who wish to work in this area of communication such as family, friends, communication support workers, Deaf interpreters, Hearing interpreters, etc. and are putting together a draft framework. This begins with Awareness training and moves through a number of stages up to the provision of a specialist interpreter training module which in turn will lead to nationally recognised qualifications in the United Kingdom.

PROPOSITIONS FROM THE SYMPOSIUM ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERPRETER TRAINING AND SERVICES

William Green (Italy)

William Green is Consultant in psycho-pedagogy with Lega del Filo d'Oro (National Deafblind Association) in Italy. Over a period of 25 years he has worked in the field of deafblindness in Norway, France and Italy and currently holds a number of key roles with organisations at national and international level.

I would like to propose to this group the formation and recognition of a network within the area of interpreter training. Firstly, some thoughts around the definition of a Network. According to the Dictionary (Chambers new Edition) a 'Network' is:

- Any structure in the form of a net.
- A system of lines.
- A system of units e.g. buildings, agencies, groups of people, constituting a widely spread organisation and having a common purpose.
- A group of people with a common interest who meet socially, share information, swap contacts etc.
- A system of stations connected for broadcasting the same programme e.g. radio/tv.
- A system of computer terminals that can pass information to one another to enable them to operate interactively.
- To form business or professional contacts.

'Networking' is defined as:
dance in a net, to act in imagined concealment

Nancy Foy's law says that the effectiveness of a network is inversely proportional to its formality, it needs a spider, not a chairperson, and a telephone.

The Task Culture

The task culture evolved in response to the need for an organisational form that could respond to change in a less individualistic way than a club culture, and more speedily than a role culture. The 'organisational idea' of this culture is that a group or team of talents and resources should be applied to a project, problem or task. In that way each task gets the treatment it requires - it does not have to be standardised across the organisation. Also the groups can be changed, disbanded or increased as the task changes.

A net, which can pull its cords this way and that and regroup at will, is the picture of this culture. The task culture is the preferred culture of many competent people, because they work in groups, sharing both skills and responsibilities, They are constantly working on new aspects/challenges, since every task is different, and thus keep themselves developing and enthusiastic. It is usually a warm and friendly culture because it is built around co-operative groups of colleagues without much overt-hierarchy. There are plans rather than procedures, reviews of progress rather than assessments of past performance. It is a forward-looking culture for development.

Task cultures thrive in situations where problem-solving is the job of the organisation. Consultancy, advertising, agencies, construction work, parts of journalism and the media, product development groups, surgical teams - any situation beyond the capacity of one person with minions to solve, and which cannot be embodied in procedures, needs a task culture. Networks tend to use professional, competent people who spend quite a lot of time talking together in search of the right solution. You would not use a task culture to make a wheel, because the group would want to reinvent it, or at least improve on it, first. It is a questioning culture, which chafes at routines and the daily grind of "administration' or 'repetitive chores'.

A task culture talks of 'co-ordinators' and 'team leaders' rather than 'managers'; it is full of budgets (which are plans) but short on job descriptions; it wants commitment and rewards success with more assignments. It promises excitement and challenge but not security of employment, because it cannot afford to employ people who do not continually meet new challenges successfully. Task cultures therefore tend to be full of young, energetic people developing and testing talents: people who are self-confident enough not to worry about long-term security, at least not yet!

Networks in the Deafblind Field

Networks enable people to share information and ideas, usually for their mutual benefit. In relation to DbI (Deafblind International), there are probably two kinds of networks that can function - project-based networks and interest-based networks.

Project-based Networks

These are groups that form to tackle a specific project. A project must have an outcome (e.g. production of training material, establishment of assessment service, organisation of series of training seminars, agreement of definition of deafblindness within a region). The project must also have a start and finish point, and so these networks exist only for as long as it takes to complete the task.

The network will function through exchange of information, discussion and decision-making. This may be face-to-face or though electronic media. 'Meetings' will be organised as necessary to move the project toward completion.

In a new and rapidly developing field such as deafblindness, there may be many projects that can be set up to help in development work.

Interest-based Networks

These are groups that form to enable a group of people to share information. They will be like minded people, will share a common interest. This interest may come in many different ways (e.g. parents from a wide area, people from different professional backgrounds working within the same region, teachers of young children from several different countries). These groups are likely to be long-standing, and will probably exchange information on a regular basis, whether or not they have anything specific to discuss.

In our low-incidence field, it may be that the chance to be in contact with others, and the quality of the discussion, are important benefits of this type of network, rather than the need for quality decisions or end-results.

This type of network probably responds to our needs more than others.

Network Co-ordinators

For both types of networks, there is one critical factor. The network needs a co-ordinator - someone who can ensure it functions. This person needs to be able to organise the exchange and distribution of information (whether this is achieved by meetings, newsletters, Internet bulletins, etc). They do not need to be the 'chair' or leader of the network, but must have the facilities to make contact with network members. Their organisational skills, enthusiasm, and skill in persuasion will be critical to the successful operation of a network! It is proposed that Kirsten Bjork, from Sweden, be this co-ordinator.

The Dbl Context

Some networks can be the same as regional groups that have been proposed and, in some cases, have operated in the past. But the idea allows for a number of new possibilities, that will enable DBI to more completely meet the needs of its members.

Many busy professionals cannot give time to regular meetings to exchange information, but are very willing to join a group for a time-limited period to solve a problem or produce something of benefit to each member. This possibility has now been introduced to our structure.

Although the above has assumed that members of the network will be equal partners, in our new and developing field this may not always be the case. Some very experienced members can give support to new members. Both project and interest networks can operate at different levels - they can work both horizontally and vertically:

Advisory
One service or person gives advice to others. This is a form of network, which over time, may grow into one with partners that become more equal. An example would be an Aid Agency arranging meetings for several new services, to provide training for their staff and advice on service development.

Co-operative
Each member of the network gives information to others, so they can avoid wasteful duplication of effort, and learn from each other. For example, centres within a Continent who serve similar clients would meet to discuss their practice and exchange information on, for example, their staff training procedures.

Collaborative
Members work on the same problem, and jointly divide up the work so the task is completed more efficiently. A group of professionals, from different professions and from different countries, could develop an assessment procedure to evaluate communication skills in young children. This proposed network has come about as a result of four European meetings on the subject:

Poitiers, France 1992. (initial planning meeting)
Lisbon, Portugal, 1994.
Condover, England 1996.
Leeuwenhorst, Netherlands 1999.

Proposition

It is formally proposed to seek network recognition from Deafblind International (Dbl), and that:

- The name will be "Interpreting Development Network".
- The contact person is Kirsten Bjork.
- The aim of the network will be to ensure that issues concerning the training and development of services will be considered by organisations agencies and individuals at an International level.
- One main aim will also be in the form of creating policy and defining good practice of curriculum design, models of training and service delivery.
- Recommendations will be formulated for use at national levels to promote services at a legislative level.
- The Network will also have the aim of stimulating research, supporting interpreters and service providers and will form a resource within this area.
- Target membership will be those Organisations and individuals directly involved in Interpreting for deafblind people or those the group feels can contribute to the development of the knowledge or the network.
- It will be an ongoing interest group, not project based.
- There will be at least three countries involved in the network development group and of course many more in the organisation of events and activities.

- The roles included in the Development group will be:
    - Interpreters
    - Deafblind people
    - Information officer
    - Trainers
    - *Fund raising knowledge*

- The Activities to be planned for the next two years will be:
    - Organisation of Symposium 2000
    - Distribution and production of materials
    - Identification of good practice
    - Development of guidelines
    - Ethics Position Paper
    - The identification of agencies and people interested in the field
    - Organisation of a "Clearing House" for the gathering and sharing of information
    - The identification of technology in use in the interpreting process
    - Creation of a Web Site or attached to an existing Home Page

The participants of the Symposium agreed the above proposition.

A Comparative Study of Roles, Training of, and Rights to Interpreters for Deafblind People

Lynne Hawcroft

1.0 Introduction

"I've never had a doctor who could communicate with me, except for just two minutes in 1936."
'Think Dual Sensory', Department of Health 1997, England.

"In all societies of the World there are still obstacles preventing persons with disabilities from exercising their rights and freedoms and making it difficult for them to participate fully in the activities of their societies. It is the responsibility of States to take appropriate action to remove such obstacles."
Extract from UN Standard Rules on Equalisation of Opportunities for People with Disabilities

"People who are deprived of linguistic human rights may thereby be prevented from enjoying other human right."
Verena Krasuneker, Austrian researcher at 14th Annual General Meeting of the European Union of the Deaf, 1999

1.1 Context

The countries involved in this survey are diverse, with very different, economic, social and political systems. All of these systems shape the individual response of the countries to disability, to language minorities and to service provision. These were reflected in the levels of development revealed by the survey - from countries with highly sophisticated, long established rights and communication services for deafblind people, to countries without any services at all. The developments in each country (or lack of them) shaped the responses to the survey. This sometimes made comparisons difficult and naturally those countries with the most developed services provided more information, however, the responses from all countries were valuable in contributing to the bigger picture.

1.2 Basic Human Needs

We all need water, food and shelter to be able to exist, but to be able to develop into autonomous adults we also need a nurturing family or group, to promote self esteem, confidence and a sense of identity and we also need education and access to information. Without a supportive environment in which to experience daily life and risks we all find it difficult to reach our full potential. Without effective communication the development of all human beings is inhibited and their quality of life may be undermined.

1.3 Deafblind people in each country have the same basic human needs as their sighted, hearing contemporaries. The way in which needs are met vary considerably across cultures and countries. The existence of a disability may mean that needs are met in a different way. For example, a deafblind person may require information to be adapted into a particular format, such as Braille. However, the need for the deafblind person to receive the information is as necessary, as for anybody else. Failure to meet these basic needs, denies deafblind people their human rights and confines them to restricted lifestyles. This not only limits the development of the individual but also produces more dependency and higher cost to the state.

1.4 In 1998, organizations in Italy, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom jointly put forward a proposal to the European Commission for funding to create a **"Common Agenda for Action"** for training workers with deafblind people, in the countries of Europe. The aim was to record how those countries with more advanced services and training had developed their services and to enable others to learn some of the lessons from their experience. A grant was awarded under the Exchange and Information Actions on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People, and a survey and a symposium were instigated. During the symposium a network for information exchange was proposed (and subsequently established), to share the best knowledge available and to provide a contact point for interested countries.

1.5 The symposium to which all the countries were invited was held at Leeuwenhorst, The Netherlands in early June 1999 called the "International Symposium on Interpreting for Deafblind People: Developments and Innovations".

1.6 The study reported here builds on previous work undertaken in 1995 by the Acquired Deafblind Network which is now a network of Deafblind International. The earlier work collected information about the services provided for deafblind people in 20 countries and is described in *"State of the Art of Support Services in Europe"* presented by Anneke Balder to a United Nations seminar in 1996. This earlier research identified interpreting as the most common service provided to deafblind people in the responding countries and this became the focus of the current study.

Table 1

Services	Number of Countries
Interpreters Belgium (Flanders), Denmark, Germany, UK, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands	10
Volunteers France, Germany, UK, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Spain, The Netherlands	8
Guide dogs Belgium (Flanders), UK, Ireland, Norway, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands	7
Contact Persons Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Norway	5
Personal assistants Germany, Iceland, Norway, Sweden	4
Intervenors UK, Slovakia, Spain	3
Guide-help Services UK, Sweden	2

The specialist services found only in a few places included:
rehabilitation and mobility programmes
ambulatory counselling programme
occupational therapy

Anneke Balder 1996

1.7 In the current study the concept of interpreting services for deafblind people has different meanings depending on the context in the individual country and on the stage of development of their services. In some countries there are no distinct interpreting services for deafblind people, although most had sign language interpreting for Deaf people. Often the only source of support to deafblind people, other than from their families, was from volunteers. Those countries with very well established sign language interpreting services often have differentiated their services and have specific provision for deafblind people. Additionally, countries with more advanced services have developed other service roles, alongside interpreters. These workers have different names in different countries, for example, contact person, guide-communicator, but they are all characterised by undertaking a broader role than sign language interpreters, (see appendix I for Danish definition of a contact person). They would for instance, guide and interpret for a deafblind individual in a social or recreational setting, would accompany them shopping or read mail to them. The decision was taken to use the term interpreting in the Survey, as it had been in the earlier work and seemed to be understood by the majority of countries.

Focus, Methods and Scope of the Survey

1.8 To introduce the new study to potential respondents, an introductory letter was sent to all known contacts in Europe, at the end of 1998, informing them that the survey was to take place and seeking their co-operation. The actual questionnaire was circulated during February and March 1999. The mailing list was based on contacts used in the earlier project and on organisations known to planning group members. A random small number of additional countries outside Europe were included for further information and comparison.

Twenty four survey questionnaires were sent to service and/or training organisations in Europe.
Six questionnaires were sent to known deafblind membership organisations seeking information about the views of deafblind people about their particular needs and aspirations.
Three were sent to non-European countries (Australia, Canada and Japan).

1.9 The most common methods of communication used by deafblind people in the responding countries:

Table 2

Method	Number of Countries
Sign Language	15
Speech	12
Sign language by touch (hands on)	11
Finger spelling	8
Braille	6
Printed letters on palm	6
Typing	4
Writing/reading in appropriate format	4

(Source: Hassinen – Symposium Paper)

These findings are important in that they indicate that a sizeable group requiring communication support are those people who use speech and lip reading. This points to the need for sufficient workers with skills in modifying one language, in addition to the need for interpreters who can operate in more than one language. Many factors influence the answers, and the responses may underestimate the non sign language group as there are undoubtedly more people with dual sensory loss in old age than there are sign language users. It will also be seen later in this report that many services for deafblind people have grown from services to Deaf people, which would mean sign language users are more readily identified.

1.10 In the 1995 survey, the ten countries identified as providing interpreting services, all had training programmes, ranging between 60 hours and four years. It was decided in this Study to gather more information about the course content and training routes, as this information could be useful to other countries, where no such courses exist.

1.11 The trend in a number of countries to have the rights of disabled/deaf people enshrined in law is also explored. This will question how the existence of legal rights for interpreting services influence the development of these services, and what difference direct legislation and indirect (ie anti-discriminatory) legislation have on these developments.

1.12 Replies were received from 19 countries, with four of these countries also returning questionnaires from membership organisations.

Table 3

Countries Returning Survey Questionnaires

	A (service organisations)	**B** (member organisations)
Austria	X	
Belgium	X	
Croatia	X	
Czech Republic	X	X (2)
Denmark	X	
Finland	X	
France	X	X
Germany	X	
Iceland	X	
Italy	X	
Poland	X	
Portugal	X	
Russia		X
The Netherlands	X	
Norway	X	
Spain	X	
Sweden	X	X
Switzerland	X	
United Kingdom	X	X
plus		
Canada	X	

80

2.0 Survey Responses – Member Organisations

This chapter should be read in conjunction with the full responses to the questionnaires which are reproduced in statistical format in the spreadsheets in Appendix I. For ease of reference, the original questions from the Survey are included on the spreadsheet

2.1 Responses were received from member organisations in four countries (Iceland, France, Sweden, and the UK). Czechoslovakia sent returns from three separate organisations, but only used one type of questionnaire. The questionnaires they returned were all for service and not member organisations and therefore, one has been included in Section 3 to avoid double counting. The two additional returns from Czechoslovakia have been included, wherever possible, in this section.

2.2 Only Iceland said deafblind people have a legal right to interpreting in their country, although Sweden states *"authorities are obliged to provide"*. In Iceland and in Sweden deafblind people would have an interpreter in higher education, at medical appointments, at work, and for leisure activities. The services are provided free to deafblind people in both countries. Czechoslovakia say that the needs of deafblind people are *"not yet reflected in law"* and are currently dealt with under legislation for blind and for deaf people.

2.3 Services were established in two of the four countries by support from central government, and in one of those countries by campaigning by deaf or blind organisations. Sweden reported campaigning by deafblind organisations had been significant. Sweden, the UK and Czechoslovakia are campaigning to have the rights of deafblind people included in law/statute. In Czechoslovakia, services were improved by a systematic survey of deafblind people, which led to the establishment of the deafblind member organisation in 1992. France is not campaigning and Iceland already have relevant laws.

2.4 Irrespective of the legal situation all four countries reported deafblind people have difficulty obtaining an interpreter, because:

- services are not available
- services are under funded
- there are not enough trained interpreters

2.5 If deafblind people are unhappy about the interpreting service they receive they can complain to the service provider (e.g. interpreting agency), or regulating body (for registered interpreters). These systems for complaints are part of the structures for interpreting services to deaf people. In Sweden the deafblind counsellor would be involved in trying to mediate between the deafblind individual and the interpreter. In most countries the deafblind organisations themselves could be approached, even though they may not employ the interpreters. The outcome of a complaint seems to be limited in most countries, although professional associations and regulatory bodies could withdraw status in extreme circumstances.

2.6 Deafblind people hope in the future to increase the number of interpreters and to improve the spread of interpreters across their countries as many are currently based in major centres of population only. Those without rights to services want to see them *"as of right"* in the future.

2.7 The Most Common Communication Methods

Table 4

Deafblind People		Skills Interpreter should have	
Speech	5	All skills listed	3
Sign Language	2	Sign Language	4
SL by touch	4	SL by touch	2
Finger spelling	1	Finger spelling	3

Three countries said that each of the functions mentioned in the Survey were included in the interpreter's role (language transmission, guiding and transmitting visual information). France did not reply, presumably because there are no specific interpreters for deafblind people. Three responses suggested interpreters should have all the skills listed *("any or all depending on the deafblind person"* - UK) but Iceland included only sign language, sign language by touch and finger spelling.

2.8 The issues currently being discussed by the deafblind organisations included, trying to establish a service (France/Czechoslovakia) and trying to gain rights to services (UK). Problems mentioned were the isolation of interpreters, where they have to work alone and the lack of any professional organisation. Hopes for the future include trying to professionalise the work (France) and having *"more emphasis on the deafblind group which uses speech"* (Iceland).

2.9 Each country said they had guides for deafblind people. Sweden includes this function in the interpreting role. France does not have any training for guides, whereas in Iceland they are trained by the Blind Association and in the UK they have a recognised national certificate. Four countries have interpreter-guides. In Sweden there are interpreters for deafblind people and in Czechoslovakia, there are no interpreters specifically for deafblind people. The UK has a nationally recognised certificate and in France they are not trained. Iceland has training arranged with a Danish Deaf organisation and the Blind Association. Three countries have interpreters especially for deafblind people, the UK commented that sometimes the guide-interpreter undertakes assignments which are interpreting only. Sweden and the UK believe the training provided is acceptable, France does not. Two organisations were aware of plans for the future but did not explain what they were.

2.10 Sweden stressed that there are big differences in the regional authorities responsible for providing interpreting services and they often know little about deafblindness. They see the need for promoting awareness and education in these authorities.

3.0 Survey Responses – Service Organisastions

This chapter should be read in conjunction with the full responses to the questionnaires, which are reproduced in statistical format in appendix I.

The questions for the three sections in the survey were designed in collaboration with the three overview speakers who presented their findings to the Symposium. Caroline Ellis spoke about rights and the legislative background to services, Leena Hassinen about the roles and functions of workers and Jacques Souriau about training. The information presented in this report, covers that presented by the three speakers from questionnaires returned prior to the Symposium, plus additional responses received following the Symposium.

The Sections in the Survey were:

- Legislation and Rights to Interpreting Services for Deafblind People
- Roles and Functions of the Deafblind Interpreter
- Models of Interpreter Training

3.1 Legislation and Rights to Interpreting Services for Deafblind People

All quotations used in 3.1 below are from Caroline Ellis symposium paper

3.1.1 Countries with Rights to Services

Eight countries have legislation which confer rights to interpreting services, and Ellis remarks, but Norway is the only country in which deafblind people have it because of their specific status as deafblind people. In most countries, including Norway, rights are restricted to specific areas. Six countries include interpreting services for deafblind people under legislation for disabled people or Deaf people, although the legislation in Finland mentions deafblind people. One country, Iceland, provides interpreting services under legislation for language interpreting and not disability. However, it is not always clear from the returns if interpreting services extend beyond sign language to other forms of communication support, such as, lip speaking.

3.1.2 In 1990 Denmark introduced the right to a 'contact person' for every deafblind person, to help with access to communication, information and getting out and about. No other country reported having the right to a support person enshrined in law. The number of interpreting hours deafblind people are entitled to in countries where there is legislation varies enormously, from 18 to 500 hours per year. There are other variables present - in Belgium, for instance, the basic hours can be increased by the deafblind person *"fighting"* for extra time. Many countries provide interpreting only in specified settings, for example, in education and at work.

(Note - unless otherwise stated the number of hours refers to annual allowances)

Five countries give deafblind people a right to a minimum number of hours of interpreter time for daily living, such as, shopping, leisure, social activities, and medical appointments, often with extra hours for education and work.

The countries are:

Belgium: minimum 36 hours plus 10 per cent of deafblind person's work time.
Denmark: 20 out of 37 hours of work time.
Finalnd: minimum 240 hours (twice as much as Deaf people). Some people receive more depending on where they live and there are separate systems for education and work.
The Netherlands: has an administrative right to a minimum of 18 ghours interpreter time. Betweeb 60-150 hours may be obtained if fought for. Like Finland there are separate systems for educationand work and as many hours as necessary are provided.
Norway: minimum 500 hours with extra hours for work and medical appointments.

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3.1.3 In other countries there are *"rights to interpreter services in certain situations, but often these are described as 'limited'"*, for example, in Czechoslovakia interpreting services in Court are free to the deafblind person, but for daily living and for medical appointments they must pay for the interpreter. In a number of countries these rights relate to employment and legal situations and sometimes to adult educational support. This may seem appropriate, however, the Information Centre for Acquired Deafblindness in Denmark remarks that *"very few deafblind people are able to exercise this right since very few are working or in education"*.

Table 5

The number of countries giving rights to interpreting in:

Higher Education	Work	Medical	Court	Daily Living	Leisure
9	12	8	12	6	6

3.1.4 A variety of agencies provide the interpreting services including state run agencies, voluntary organisations, local and regional government and state funded businesses.

3.1.5 There are major differences in the take up of interpreting services, even where legislation exists. Belgium reports a very low use of interpreters, yet in Norway there are eight different centres for deafblind people, funded by the government.

3.1.6 The fact that so many countries base their services on general rights to disabled people or more commonly to Deaf people has implications for services to deafblind people. It seems that the distinct needs of deafblind people can be lost within more general provision, such as sign language interpreting, which may mean limited access to, or inadequate training of interpreters. Using the sign language model of provision also focuses on a minority within the deafblind group, as the majority of deafblind people do not use sign language. In some countries this model is felt to restrict the development of more appropriate workers for deafblind people, variously described as, guide-communicators or contact persons.

3.1.7 Countries without Rights to Interpreting Services

Of the countries which provide services without a specific legislative base, (Canada, Croatia, France, Sweden, UK), some have anti-discriminatory legislation which imposes a duty on some service providers to ensure direct access to their services. This requires the service providers to do whatever is necessary to facilitate access, including providing interpreters for deafblind people. However, the services are not provided, as of right and would require the deafblind person to take legal action against a service provider for any lack of service. The legislation is felt to be weak by some countries and it will take some years to build legal precedents. One major drawback in this approach is the reliance on the service provider, who may be uninformed, as described by Sweden -
"The officials generally do not know much about deafblindness and the needs of deafblind people and they need more information and education"

3.1.8 The German speaking area of Switzerland reported no specific service for deafblind people, although social workers often step into the role and sign language interpreters may be available. Germany appears to have few distinct services, although, again, sign language services are available and care staff from a residential unit for deafblind people are asked to interpret outside of the unit. Only Russia suggested they had no interpreting services at all, and in Croatia and Poland they depend entirely on volunteers.

3.1.9 In the countries without legislative rights nine countries are actively campaigning for statutory rights for deafblind people. Sixteen countries reported deafblind people have difficulty getting interpreters, some of the reasons being:

Reasons for the Problem	Number of Countries
Some deafblind people do not know what is available	10
Services are not available everywhere	10
Standards vary	8
Not enough trained interpreters	15
Services are underfunded	10
Services are not good	6
Services are really for Deaf people	10
Lack of political support	7

3.1.10 If deafblind people are dissatisfied with the service they receive they can complain to the interpreter, to the organisation employing the interpreter or to a regulatory body. In a small number of countries the interpreter could be reprimanded or barred from working. However, many countries said they had never received a complaint.

3.1.11 The hopes of deafblind people for the future included being able to have an interpreting service, wishing for more interpreters and for better training to be available.

3.1.12 Funding of Services

Interpreting services are funded in a wide variety of ways:

• via national government	9 countries
• via regional/local government	10 countries
• via voluntary organisations	6 countries

In some countries pensions, benefits or vouchers are given to deafblind people to purchase their own service.

3.1.13 In ten countries services are free to deafblind people and in five, deafblind people have to make some contribution to costs, according to their means. In four countries a specific number of hours of support are provided free and after that the deafblind person must pay something. In one country deafblind people are expected to pay for the travelling expenses of interpreters.

3.1.14 Ellis states that the stronger the rights to interpreting services in law, the more likely provision will be free to deafblind people - as in Finland, The Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. There are a variety of ways in which services are funded even where they are free at the point of delivery. Some are state funded directly, through national, regional and state agencies or through voluntary or private bodies funded by government. The service may be paid for and provided free or a system of 'purchase' may be in place such as the use of vouchers. Conversely, the weaker the right the more likely the deafblind person will have to pay. The level of payment varies, sometimes it is a flat rate contribution, or an hourly rate or expenses only. Many deafblind people rely on family and volunteers and many voluntary organisations of/for the deafblind, the blind and the deaf use their own resources to provide services.

3.1.15 Rights to interpreting services were obtained by:

	Countries
Campaigns by deafblind organisations	7
Campaigns by Deaf or Blind organisations	8
Campaigns by professionals	6
Support by local/regional government	1
Support by central government	3
Existence of civil rights	3

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3.1.16 Public bodies which provide or pay for interpreters to access their services:

	Countries
Courts	12
Social Welfare	8
College/Higher Education	7
Hospitals	6
Money Advice	5
Employers	3
Doctors	3

3.1.17 Ten countries feel the absence of legal rights have been a barrier to developing services.

Those services which have been established, despite the lack of legal rights were helped by:

	Countries
Campaigns by deafblind organisations	8
Campaigns by Deaf or Blind organisations	5
Campaigns by professionals	5
Support by local/regional government	1
Support by central government	1
Existence of civil rights	3

3.1.18 The most advanced services have been developed in countries with a strong legislative base (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Netherlands and Norway). All the other countries felt the lack of a legal base for services has been a barrier to the development of services. Spain's response makes this point clearly, *"as services are only provided by one private institution and there is no legislation this makes it difficult for these services to get to every deafblind person"*.

3.2 Roles and Functions of the Deafblind Interpreter

All quotations used in 3.2 below are from Lena Hassinen's symposium paper

3.2.1 The Roles and Functions

The survey suggested the role of the deafblind interpreter commonly included three elements:

- Language transmission
- Guiding
- Transmitting visual information

Sixteen of the 19 responses accepted language transmission as a central part of the role of the interpreter and 14 also felt transmitting visual information is appropriate. Guiding was not seen as included in the role by 11 respondents. This divergence of views on guiding may reflect the existence of separate workers in some countries who undertake guiding as part of another role, (e.g. contact persons in Denmark). In the absence of any other workers the deafblind interpreter may assume other roles, *"you can't just leave the deafblind person during a break"* (Denmark). The differences noted by respondents, between interpreting for Deaf people and for deafblind people, included:

- tasks are many faceted
- the need to be physically robust
- more psychological closeness
- the need to convey non manual features of sign language (e.g. agreed tactile signals for facial expressions)
- environmental information (e.g. the level of background noise or applause)

3.2.2 Only five countries, (Canada, Finland, France, Italy, Sweden, UK) report the practice of using Deaf people as interpreters and their role was described either as a relay interpreter or interpreting at social and recreational activities. A number of countries pointed out that Deaf people often take on other roles with deafblind people such as contact persons.

3.2.3 Working conditions

Ten countries said there were no guidelines or rules governing how interpreters operate, but seven, (Canada, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Norway, and the UK) do have some guidance in place. This usually consists of reference to the roles mentioned above, to ethics and to working arrangements.

Table 6

Language and communication skills interpreters require and the most common methods of communication used by deafblind people

	Skills Interpreters should have	Most common methods of communication used by deafblind people
Sign language	16	15
Sign language by touch	13	11
Fingerspelling	16	8
Printed letters on palm	12	6
Writing in appropriate way	11	4
Braille	10	6
Clear speech	11	12
Typing	10	4
Other	4	4

(Included in the "other" categories were object communication, Lorm, Signed Exact English (SEE), Two Handed Manual, Adapted Interactive Tactile Over-hand Sign Language (AITSL) and Tadoma

3.2.3 Whilst these responses indicate more deafblind people use sign language than other modes of communication this may be a feature of the way deafblindness is defined in the different countries and also that those who use sign language are more easily identified. If older people with dual sensory loss are included, many more people use residual senses, speech and lipreading to communicate. It is vital, therefore, that Interpreters and communicators need to acquire these other skills, if they are to work with deafblind people. If training focuses on sign language exclusively it may divert attention and resources from the wider range of skills needed.

3.2.4 In a number of countries, the recognition of the skills needed to interpret with deafblind people seems to have emerged from services and from courses for sign language interpreters for Deaf people. However, it should be emphasised that within the range of skills required, learning sign language is by far the most complex task, and more people may be attracted to training, if separate training for the other communication skills is offered.

3.2.5 Current Issues

The survey wanted to identify what problems countries were currently facing and seeking to resolve.

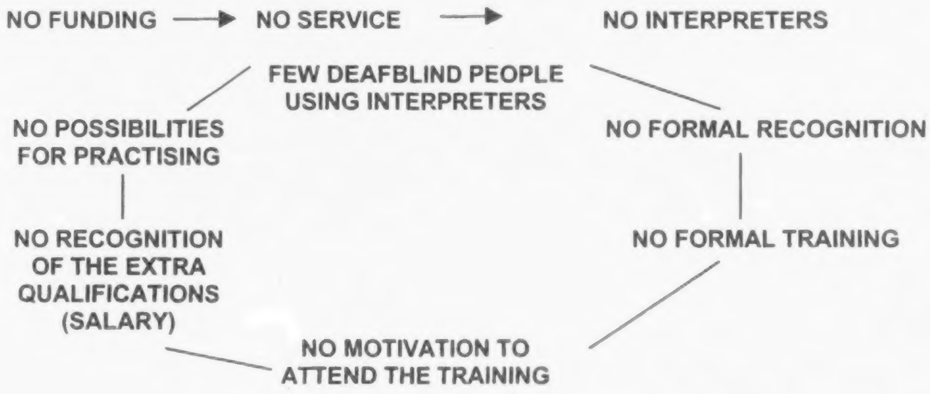
More than half of respondents reported recent concerns centred on:

- rights and access to interpreting services
- funding and resource limitations
- the number of interpreters
- the number of interpreting hours available

A number of replies also mentioned the need to develop a curriculum for training, the need for recognition of skills and role of interpreters with deafblind people, for a code of ethics and for guidelines. Other issues mentioned included, a lack of funding for travelling and accommodation, the introduction of new communication methods in training (e.g. hands-on signing) and how to promote public awareness.

3.2.6 The Current Problems

In her paper, Hassinen suggests current problems can be summarised as follows:


NO FUNDING
NO SERVICE
NO INTERPRETERS
FEW DEAFBLIND PEOPLE USING INTERPRETERS
NO POSSIBILITIES FOR PRACTISING
NO FORMAL RECOGNITION
NO RECOGNITION OF THE EXTRA QUALIFICATIONS (SALARY)
NO FORMAL TRAINING
NO MOTIVATION TO ATTEND THE TRAINING

The need for more training opportunities was seen to be paramount, with the recognition of special skills additional to sign language being seen as very important. It was felt there should be extra payment for the additional skills and more opportunity for interpreters to work in pairs.

3.2.7 New Developments

Most developments mentioned were linked to training. In some countries training was just being established, (Portugal and Croatia (for volunteers)). In other countries training was to be extended and Finland is to instigate training for support workers; The Netherlands is planning a course for guide-interpreters and the UK is planning additional courses for 'hands on' interpreting and for deafblind interpreting (sign language). Italy is hoping to establish a distinct course for deafblind interpreting. Finland is intending to transfer the current training from a college to a University base. Canada mentioned establishing a national training centre for access to communication services for deafblind people.

New Projects

Some exciting new developments are planned:

Denmark	- a three year project (government funded) on interpreting in social situations
The Netherlands	- a four year project to establish a 'personal budget' or direct payments to deafblind people
Sweden	- currently have a three year project about ethics

3.3. Models of Interpreter Training

All quotations used in 3.3 below are taken from Jacques Souriau's symposium paper.

3.3.1 Professional Workers

There is a range of different types of workers with deafblind people. Eleven countries have interpreters who work with deafblind people, but they may or may not receive special training to do this. Seven countries have guide-interpreters who specialise in communication services to deafblind people. Six countries have guides who work with deafblind people. Six countries do not have any specific workers for deafblind people, but even these have sign language interpreters for Deaf people, who may also work with deafblind people, although the numbers were often said to be small. Other professionals also take on the communication role as part of other jobs, such as social workers and teachers.

Jacques Souriau suggests three categories of professional workers be designated:

- those with the skills of interpreting and guiding (e.g. guide-interpreters or interpreter-guides)
- those with other professional roles who have language skills and guiding skills (e.g. teachers, social workers)
- those who have specific language and guiding skills with deafblind people, but who also carry out other tasks such as reading mail and whose task is to support the deafblind person in daily living (e.g. contact person, guide-communicator, support person)

In some countries, the first category could be further subdivided to include sign language interpreters, who do not guide, (eg interpreters working with Deaf people with Usher Syndrome).

3.3.2 Comparing the different types of workers, five countries have guides, six have interpreter-guides and 11 have interpreters for deafblind people. Five countries state that training to work with deafblind people is integrated into sign language interpreting courses, but it may be assumed that more of the 11 countries use this model of training. Five countries, (Croatia, Denmark, Italy – planned course, Poland, UK) mentioned specific courses for deafblind guide-interpreters.

Table 7

Content of Training	19 questionnaires
	Number
Sign Language	9
Sign Language by touch	7
Finger-spelling	10
Braille	4
Typing	4
Interpreting the context	8
Daily living activities and guidance	5
Specific ethical aspects	8
General knowledge about Db	11
Other :	3
interpreting	
note taking	
guiding	

3.3.3 There was agreement amongst respondents on most areas of the content of training. Three areas most closely linked to skills with blind people produced less agreement. This suggests most courses were derived from interpreter courses with Deaf people, where developing skills with blind people would not be included. Whilst the course for sign language interpreters for Deaf people in Denmark has theoretical input on skills with deafblind people, there is no practical experience for students. Nearly all courses mentioned a contribution to training by sign language interpreters and by deafblind people. Souriau suggests *"This means that sign language is considered as very important among the skills that the interpreter guide must acquire. It also means that the contribution of the deafblind people is extremely important for supervising or providing practice."* Input from professionals associated with visual impairment was less common. This may be because their skills are viewed as less important than interpreting skills, or possibly because other workers have the tasks associated with blind people, such as guiding, within their role.

3.3.4 What range of skills are required by interpreter guides?

Souriau poses the question, does each interpreter-guide need to master the full range of skills? He suggests a distinction could be made between those who need to master sign language interpretation and those who work in one language, but in different modes, (e.g. finger-spelling, lipspeaking).

3.3.5 Prior knowledge and skills before entry to training

The number of hours required for training is directly related to the previous competency of the student. Seven countries require students to have sign language skill or qualification prior to training to work with deafblind people, but five countries train professionals without any prior experience.

3.3.6 The Professionals who contribute to training

Professionals	**Countries**
Sign language interpreters	12
Deafblind People	12
Interpreter-guides	8
Braille Instructors	6
Mobility Instructors	6
ADL	5
Social Worker	5
Family	4
Doctor	1

Table 8 - How many hours are used for the training of individual subjects

19 questionnaires	Language skills	Supervised practice	Theory	Other	Total
Italy (project)		200	400		600
Belgium	10	15	15		40
Denmark	14	9	27	40	90
Canada		160			160
The Netherlands					120
Finland	120 Credits				120
Norway					1/3 of two years
Poland	10	28	16		54
Iceland	400	10	30		440
Czech Rep	400	100	30		550
Croatia	3hours per week		1	20	4 hours

3.3.7 In relation to the hours devoted to individual subjects, *"Not all the questionnaires brought answers to this question and in some cases the answers are more related to projects than to established procedures. The span is extremely large, the lowest figure is 40 hours and the highest is four semesters. These figures are difficult to compare because they do not describe exactly the same things."*

3.3.8 In some cases, training means helping professionals to adapt their previously acquired skills to the specific situations of deafblind people. In other cases, all the skills have to be learned and include skills which are not directly part of the usual tasks of interpreter guides, for instance supporting deafblind children in educational settings. The Croatian voluntary organisation for deafblind people is piloting a new course for volunteers. Sauriau suggests that *"probably each country will have to organise its training procedures according to the context of legislation and of the other professional training procedures that are related to guiding and interpreting for deafblind people"*

Table 9 - Social recognition

19 questionnaires	
	Number
There is an examination: Austria, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Czech, Finland, Iceland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, UK	**11**
Interpreter-guides for deafblind people are allowed to be interpreter in S L for deaf people: Belgium, Croatia, Finland, France, Norway,	6
Special acknowledged diploma: Austria, Canada, Finland, Italy, Norway, Sweden, UK	7
Salary is higher: Finland, Norway	2
lower: Canada, Denmark, UK	3
same: Austria, Belgium, Czech, France, Iceland, Italy, Sweden	7

3.3.9 In most countries there is an examination, but it is not always clear if the examination is for interpreter guides or for sign language interpreters. The examination may be at University or Diploma level, usually where it is associated with sign language interpreting training. In seven of the countries there is an accredited diploma for interpreter-guides for deafblind people. The existence of a diploma is probably related to the level at which services for the deafblind are developed and recognised in the country.

3.3.10 With regards to the rates of pay compared to sign language interpreters, two countries pay extra, three pay less and seven pay the same rate. It is difficult to know why the difference in rates of pay exist. It could be argued that guide-interpreting requires more skills and the salary should be higher. It could also be argued that interpretation for deafblind requires one interpreter for each deafblind person which is extremely expensive, so this could be suggested as a reason for paying guide interpreters at a lower level.

Table 10 - Practical training conditions

	19 questionnaires
	Number
Who pays:	
The trainee/student	6
Voluntary organisations	3
Employers	4
It is free (supported by the state)	7
The students are paid during their training: Denmark, (contact persons only) Finland, France (some)	3

Which organisation provides the training

University	6
Voluntary organisations	5
Other e.g.	8
High school, college, counsellors	

3.3.11 In only three countries Finland, France (sometimes) and Denmark (this includes training for contact persons), are students paid during their training. In seven countries training is financially supported by the state and is free to participants, but in six countries students are required to contribute to the cost of their training. Employers fund training in four countries and voluntary organisations pay for training in three others.

3.3.12 A range of organisations provide the training and in some countries more than one type of organisation is involved. Six universities currently provide training, with Finland aiming to upgrade their course from college to university level in the future. Five countries have courses provided by voluntary organisations and eight by colleges, other educational institutions, and individual professionals. One country responded that training was provided by direct experience and professional supervision. Two countries, Croatia and Portugal, mentioned that their first specific training for working with deafblind people is currently being planned and Italy hopes to use the information from the symposium and research to influence the new planned training. Other countries (Finland, The Netherlands and the UK) are developing different types of training.

Sauriau concludes, *"On the whole, it could be mentioned that there is quite a consensus about the content of the training but there is a variety of procedures geared at organising this training. Besides, there is still a lot to do regarding how the various professional categories which are involved in guiding and interpreting for deafblind people are designed. So, a good result of this seminar should be to better design these categories and to give guidelines, as regards the contents of training that are necessary for each of these categories."*

4.0 A Common Agenda for Action

4.1 Common Principles

It should be acknowledged that the countries involved in this study are all at different stages in the development of interpreting services for deafblind people. All countries need to know what they are aiming to achieve, even if they take various routes to get there. It is hoped that the following principles and recommendations will provide a map for those at the beginning and a common destination for those already on their way towards the common goal.

4.1.1 To achieve equal citizenship and social inclusion, deafblind people require rights to Interpreter-Guide services, which meet their specific needs. These human and civil rights of deafblind people relate to equality of access, they are a means to an end, not an end in themselves. Without such access, all areas of life are severely curtailed for deafblind people, and their potential contribution to their communities is undermined.

4.1.2. To realise these rights to services, countries need a legal framework which acknowledges the unique nature of deafblindness and which specifically links these rights to deafblind people.

4.1.3 A network of services should be developed to meet the information, communication and mobility needs of each individual deafblind person. Dependence on a single worker or individual is unacceptable and may at times be dangerous.

4.1.4 Deafblind people need a wide range of Interpreter-Guide services, depending on the nature and age of onset of their deafblindness and on their personal needs and aspirations. The range of skills within these services, should, as a minimum, include skills in spoken language delivered in different modalities (e.g. lipspeaking) and skills in interpreting between two or more different languages.

4.1.5 The right to an Interpreter-Guide service should enable the deafblind individual to lead a full life, ensuring access to:

- daily living activities
- social situations
- education
- work
- health care
- public services

4.1.6 Each government must ensure that, irrespective of how the services are delivered, there is sufficient funding and monitoring to guarantee adequate provision. The service should be available irrespective of where the deafblind person lives and, despite diverse sources of funding, should be free to the deafblind person.

4.1.7 Each country must take steps to ensure deafblind people are aware of their rights to Interpreter-Guide services, have accurate information about the services and easy access to them. Deafblind people and their membership organisations should be involved in developing these services.

4.2 Recommendations

Strategic

4.2.1 National governments need to explicitly acknowledge the unique nature of deafblindness by introducing legal rights to personal Interpreting-guiding services for deafblind people.

4.2.2 Governments should work collectively and individually to establish or to improve services to deafblind people in their country. Each government should instigate inter-departmental collaboration to ensure strategic planning makes best use of resources in providing comprehensive services to all deafblind people.

4.2.3 Resources need to be identified separately to fund Interpreter-Guide training. Services. should be free at the point of delivery and universally available for deafblind people and universally available to deafblind people - provision should not be dependent on where they live.

4.2.4 Governments should ensure that appropriate organisations and individuals in their country are affiliated to the Interpreting Development Network recognised by Deafblind International, to pool information about services and to identify and disseminate good practice.

4.2.5 Non-governmental agencies need to work co-operatively to create an effective lobby, within their own country and collectively with other countries to improve communication services to deafblind people.

4.2.6 The provision of interpreting services to deafblind people benefits the government of the country as much as the deafblind individual (most services have started in the statutory sector for example, for court or work) because it enables the government to make its services accessible to deafblind people.

4.3 The Network of Interpreting Services

4.3.1 The development of a comprehensive network of interpreting and guiding services should be given priority. Roles and functions of individual workers should be defined to ensure that services provide the wide range of skills necessary to meet the diverse interpreting, communication and guiding needs of all deafblind people.

4.3.2 All communication workers and interpreters with deafblind people should be regulated, by a professional body or organisation. They should adhere to a Code of Ethics, work within good practice guidelines and be subject to a formal complaints system. Those who are employed should have contracts of employment and those employed on a sessional basis should have a formal contract.

4.3.3 Each government should provide the resources to inform all deafblind people of the services available to them. Information must be provided in formats accessible to deafblind people. Deafblind people may require some training on how to make most effective use of communicator-guide or interpreting services.

4.4 The Range Of Interpreting Skills

4.4.1 The wide range of interpreting and guiding needs of deafblind people should be documented and the types of individual workers required to provide the skills to meet those needs should be established. Two major groups of skills can be identified:

- interpretation between spoken and sign language
- modulation of one language

4.4.2 As interpreting between spoken and sign languages for deafblind people develops, various approaches are likely to emerge, these may include, hands on interpreting, visual frame interpreting and other approaches.

4.4.3 Ways of modulating a language to communicate with deafblind people will include clear speech, lipspeaking, writing and fingerspelling.

4.5 Training

4.5.1 There will need to be a number of different training routes available:

- All courses for Sign Language Interpreters should include at least a basic theoretical and practical input on communicating with deafblind people.
- Extra modules on work with deafblind people should be available to all qualified Sign Language Interpreters following basic training. This should eventually become a specialised Diploma in Sign Language Interpreting for Deafblind People.
- Distinct courses for communicator-guides, (guide-communicators, contact persons, personal assistants, volunteers) should be established as a matter of priority in every country.

4.5.2 Each course should involve deafblind people in delivering and monitoring training outputs.

4.5.3 State funding mechanisms should be identified to enable students to undertake communication-guide training urgently, if this is not already established. It would be possible to provide guide-communicator courses much more quickly and at much less cost than courses for Interpreters, and those countries where sign language services are not well developed, this should be the first option.

4.6 Action

These recommendations have been communicated to the Interpreting Development Network, which was established in 1999 following recognition by Deafblind International. The role of the Network will be to communicate and promote the common principles, recommendations and strategies outlined above.

Appendix I

Spreadsheets

Section A.	A6	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	A7.0	A7.1	a	b	c	d	e	f	g
Legislation & rights to Ints service for DB people	Are any public bodies in your country required to provide (and pay for) Ints support for DB people to allow them to access their services?	Employers	Hospitals	Doctors	Education e.g. College / University	Social Welfare	Money benefit offices (Social Security)	Courts	If DB people do not have legal rights to Ints services, has this been a barrier to Interpreting services	IF DB people do not have legal rights how have Ints services for DB people been developed?	Campaign by DB orgs	Campaign by D or B orgs	Campaign by profs	Support of regional / local government	Support of central governmen t	Existance of civil rights for disabled people	Other
Austria	▨	O	O	O	O	O	Y	O	Y	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y
Belgium	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	N	▨	Y	O	Y	O	O	O	O
Canada	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O
Croatia	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	Y	▨	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O
Czech	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	Y	▨	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	O
Denmark	▨	O	Y	O	O	Y	O	Y	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Finland	▨	O	O	O	O	Y	Y	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
France	▨	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	▨	O	O	Y	O	O	O	O
Germany	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	SR	SR	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	SR
Iceland	▨	O	O	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y SR	N	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Italy	▨	O	Y	O	Y	O	Y	Y	Y SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O
Netherlands	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Norway	▨	O	Y	O	Y	O	O	Y	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Poland	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Portugal	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	O	▨	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O
Russia	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sweden	▨	O	O	O	Y	O	O	Y	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Switzerland	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y SR	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O SR
UK	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O

Section B.	B1.0	a	b	c	B2.0	B3.0	B4.0	B5.0	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	I	
Roles & functions of the DB Interpreter	Which functions do Ints have in your country?	Language transmission	Guiding	Transmitting visual information	Describe the role of the Ints for DB people as compared to Ints for D people	Do D people act as Ints for DB people?	Are there any rules or guidelines about working conditions for DB Ints?	What skills should Ints have?	Sign language	Sign language by touch	Finger spelling	Printed letters on palm	Writing in appropriate way	Braille	Clear speech	Typing	Other	
Austria	▨	Y	N	N	O	N	N	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Belgium	▨	Y	O	Y	B1.0	N	N	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y Lorm	
Canada	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	SR	SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y SR	
Croatia	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	N	N	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y SR	
Czech	▨	Y	O	O	O	N	Y	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y SR	
Denmark	▨	Y	O	Y	SR	N	Y SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	O	
Finland	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	Y SR	Y SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	
France	▨	Y	O	Y	SR	Y SR	N	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	
Germany	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Iceland	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	N SR	N SR	▨	Y	O	Y	O	O	O	Y	O	O	
Italy	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	Y SR	Y SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	O	
Netherlands	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	N	N	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Norway	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	N	Y SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	?	O	
Poland	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	N SR	N SR	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SR	
Portugal	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	N	N	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	
Russia	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	
Sweden	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	N	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	O	O	
Switzerland	▨	Y SR	SR	SR	SR	N SR	N	▨	Y	O	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	O	
UK	▨	Y	Y	Y	SR	Y SR	Y SR	▨	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	O	O	O	

Section C.	C1.0	C1.1	C1.2	C1.3	C1.4	C2.0	a	b	C3	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	I	j	k
Models of interpreter training	Which categories of Ints exist in your country?	Guides for DB people	Ints-Guides for DB people	Ints for DB people	Are there any other prof workers	Is the Ints-Guides training:	Included in a course for sign language Ints	A specific course for Guides & Ints for DB only	What is the content of the training for Ints	SL	SL by touch	Finger-spelling	Braille	Typing	Interpreting the context	What is happening, informing DB another person is present	Daily living activities and guidance	Specific ethical aspects	General knowledge about Dbness	Other
Austria	O	N	N	Y	N	▨	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Belgium	SR	N	N	?	N	▨	Y	O	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y Lorm
Canada	SR	Y SR	Y SR	Y	O	▨	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Croatia	N	N	N	N	N	▨	N	Y	▨	Y	Y	Y	N	O	O	N	N	N	Y	O
Czech	O	N	N	Y	Y	▨	O	O	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O
Denmark	SR	N	Y SR	Y	Y SR	▨	O	Y	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	O	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O
Finland	SR	Y SR	Y SR	Y	O	▨	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
France	SR	O	O	Y	Y	▨	O	O	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SR
Germany	SR	SR	O	O	SR	▨	O	SR	▨	Y	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	O .
Iceland	SR	Y	O	Y	Y SR	▨	Y	O	▨	O	O	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	SR
Italy	O	Y SR	Y SR	Y	Y SR	▨	O	Y	▨	O	O	O	O	O	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y SR
Netherlands	O	N	N	Y	O	▨	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Norway	SR	N	Y SR	N	N	▨	Y	O	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	?	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	SR
Poland	O	N	Y	N	N SR	▨	O	Y	▨	Y	O	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	Y	Y	Y SR
Portugal	O	N	N	N	N	▨	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Russia	O	O	O	O	O	▨	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sweden	O	SR	N	Y	Y	▨	Y	O	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	O	O	Y	Y	Y
Switzerland	SR	N	N SR	N	N SR	▨	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
UK	SR	Y SR	N SR	Y SR	Y SR	▨	O	Y	▨	SR	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Section A	A1.0	A1.1	A1.2	A2.0	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	A3.0		a	b	c	d
DB Survey for Service User Organisations	Do DB people have the legal right to Ints time in your country?	If yes, does the law say how many hours of Ints time per year DB people can have? No of hrs?	Do DB people feel the number of hours is reasonable?	Does a DB person have a right to an Interpreter for:	Further or Higher Ed classes	Medical or hospital appnts	Work	Court	Shopping or other daily tasks	Liesure and other social activities	Other	Are Ints services free to DB people?	If no, what is charging policy	Some hrs free then a charge	DB pay as to their means	DB pay Ints expenses	Other
France	N	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O		N	▨	O	O	O	O
Iceland	Y	N	O	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	Y		Y	▨				
Sweden	N	but admin. right	O	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	▨				
UK	N	O	O	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O		O	▨				

Section A.	A4.0	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	A5.0	a	A6.0		a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h
DB Survey for Service User Organisations	If DB do not have legal rights, how have services for DB been developed?	Campaign by DB Orgs	Campaign by D or B Orgs	Campaign by profs	Support of reg / local gov	Support of central gov	Existance of civil rights for disabled	Other	Are DB Orgs campaign-ing to include the rights of DB to Ints in law/ statute?	If no, what else is being done?	Do DB have trouble getting Ints?	If yes, what are the prob-lems ?	Some DB do not know what is available	Ints services are not available	The standard of Ints services is different across the country	There are not enough trained Ints	Ints services are under-funded	Services are not good	Services are for D and don't meet the needs of DB	There is no political support for providing Ints services
France	▨	O	O	O	O	Y	O	O	N	O	Y	▨		Y		Y	Y		Y	Y
Iceland	▨	O	Y	O	O	Y	O	O	O	O	Y	▨	O	Y	O	Y	Y	O	O	O
Sweden	▨	Y	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	O	Y	▨	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	O	O	O
UK	▨	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	Y	O	Y	▨	Y	Y	Y	O	Y	Y	Y	Y

Appendix II

Definition of a Contact Person in law

In Denmark, *"persons who are deafblind are in addition entitled to the necessary financial support required for the services of a special contact person"*.

The tasks of the contact person are listed in guidance from the Ministry of Social Welfare:

- To visit and communicate with the deaf and blind person
- To help keep him/her in touch with day-to-day events (via newspaper reading, etc)
- To function as a link between the disabled person and his or her environment
- To assist the disabled person with letters, personal matters, bills, etc
- To function as a guide when shopping, visiting, conducting business, etc
- To guide and interpret for the disabled person when communicating with the authorities, and in banks, post offices, etc
- To help with activities such as courses, meetings, etc

i) Questionnaire Sent to Service and Training Organisations

DEAFBLIND SURVEY

Section A Legislation And Rights To Interpreting Services For Deafblind People

A.1 Do deafblind people have a legal right to interpreter time in your country?

Yes ☐ No ☐

A1.2 What law gives this right and when was it passed?

Names of Laws	**Dates**

A1.2.1 Does the law:

a) include specific reference to deafblind people

YES ☐ NO ☐

b) is this a right deafblind people have because they are deaf?

YES ☐ NO ☐

A1.2.2 Does the law say how many hours of interpreting time per year deafblind people are able to have?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please state number of hours_____________

A1.2.3 Does a deafblind person have a right to an interpreter for: *(Please tick if they apply)*

further or higher education classes ☐
medical / hospital appointments ☐
work ☐
Court ☐
shopping and other daily tasks ☐
leisure and social activities ☐
other? (please explain) ☐

A.2 Which agencies /organisations provide interpreting services?

A.3 Who funds interpreting services? *(Please tick those which apply)*

National government ☐
Regional/local government ☐
Voluntary organisations ☐
Other ☐

A.4 Are interpreting services **free** to deafblind people?

YES ☐ NO ☐

A.4.1 If no, what is the charging policy? *(Please tick)*

A fixed number of hours are free, above that there is a charge ☐
Deafblind people pay according to their means ☐
Deafblind people pay interpreter expenses only (eg travel) ☐
Other (please explain) ☐

A.5 How did deafblind people obtain rights to interpreting? *(Please tick the things you think were important)*

Campaigning by deafblind organisations ☐
Campaigning by deaf or blind organisations ☐
Campaigning by professionals ☐
Support of regional or local government ☐
Support of central government ☐
Existence of civil rights for disabled people ☐
Other (please explain)

A.6 Are any public bodies in your country required to provide (and pay for) interpreter support for deafblind people to allow them to access their services? *(Please tick)*

Employers ☐
Hospitals ☐
Doctors ☐
Education eg college university ☐
Social welfare ☐
Money benefit offices (Social Security) ☐
Courts ☐

A.7 If deafblind people do not have legal rights to interpreting services has this been a barrier to developing interpreter services?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Please explain

A.7.1 If deafblind people **do not** have legal rights how have interpreting services for deafblind people been developed? By the following organisations: *(Please tick the things you think were important)*

Campaigning by deafblind organisations ☐
Campaigning by deaf or blind organisations ☐
Campaigning by professionals ☐
Support of regional or local government ☐
Support of central government ☐
Existence of civil rights for disabled people ☐
Other (please explain) ☐

A.8 Are deafblind organisations campaigning to include the rights of deafblind people to interpreters in law/statute?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If no, what else is being done?

A.9 Do deafblind people in your country have problems getting interpreters?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, what are the problems:

- Some deafblind people do not know what is available ☐
- Interpreting services are not available everywhere ☐
- The standard of interpreting is different across the country ☐
- There are not enough trained interpreters ☐
- Interpreting services are underfunded ☐
- Services are not good ☐
- Services are provided for deaf people and don't really meet the needs of deafblind people ☐
- There is no political support for providing interpreter services ☐

A.10 If a deafblind person is unhappy about interpreting:

a) to whom can they complain?

b) what action can be taken?

A.11 What do deafblind people hope will be improved about interpreting services over the next few years?

A.12 Do you wish to make any other comments?

Section B Roles And Functions Of The Deafblind Interpreter

(Interpreter here means somebody who has been recognised as an interpreter for the deafblind or the deaf according to the law or custom in your country)

B.1 Which functions do interpreters in your country have? *(please tick)*

language transmission ☐
guiding ☐
transmitting visual information (situations, surroundings, people etc) ☐

B.2 Please describe the role of the interpreter for deafblind people as compared to an interpreter for deaf people

B.3 Do deaf people act as interpreters for deafblind people?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please describe their role

B.4 Are there any rules or guidelines about working conditions for deafblind interpreters?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes please describe

B.5 What skills should interpreters have? *(Please tick the skills an interpreter would be expected to have)*

Sign language ☐
Sign language by touch ☐
Fingerspelling ☐
Printed letters on palm ☐
Writing in appropriate way ☐
Braille ☐
Clear speech ☐
Typing ☐
Other ☐

B.5.1 What are the most common methods of communication used by deafblind people in your country?

Sign language ☐
Sign language by touch ☐
Fingerspelling ☐
Printed letters on palm ☐
Writing in appropriate way ☐
Braille ☐
Clear speech ☐
Typing ☐
Other ☐

B.6 What issues have you been discussing recently about interpreting for deafblind people and why?

B.6.1 What are the current problems?

B.6.2 What improvements would you wish to see in the job of a deafblind interpreter?

B.7 Are any new developments planned?

B.8 Do you wish to make any further comments?

Section C. Models Of Interpreter Training

C.1 Which categories of professional workers exist in your country?

C.1.1 Guides for Deafblind people

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, what is their training ?

C1.2 Interpreter-Guides for Deafblind people

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, what is their training ?

C1.3 Interpreters for Deafblind people

YES ☐ NO ☐

C1.4 Are there any other professional workers?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please name and describe their training

C.2 Is the interpreter-guides training:

included in a course for sign language interpreters? ☐

Or

a specific course directed only to guiding and interpreting for deafblind people? ☐

C.3 What is the content of the training provided for interpreters? *(please tick if included)*

Sign Language ☐
Sign Language by touch ☐
Finger-spelling ☐
Braille ☐
Typing ☐
Interpreting the context (eg describing the size of a room, giving explanation about what is happening, informing the deafblind person another person is present) ☐
Daily living activities and guidance ☐
Specific ethical aspects ☐
General knowledge about Deafblindness ☐
Other (please explain) ☐

C.4 Method of training

C4.1 Can professionals be trained without any previous background of language skills or deafblindness?

C4.2 Is skill/qualification in sign language required before training as an interpreter guide?

C.5 Which professionals contribute to the training ? *(please tick all those who take part)*

- Sign language interpreters ☐
- Deafblind people ☐
- Braille instructors ☐
- Mobility trainers ☐
- Activities in Daily Living trainers ☐
- Confirmed (qualified) Interpreter-Guides for Deafblind people ☐
- Social workers ☐
- Family members ☐
- Medical doctors ☐
- Others ☐

C.6 How long is the course for deafblind interpreting in total? --------------------

C.6.1 How many hours are used for the training on individual subjects ?

Subject	**Hours**
language skills	
supervised practice	
theory	
other	

(If you have a copy of your curriculum programme please could you send it)

C7. Is there an examination?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, what is involved in the examination?

C.8 Are Interpreter-guides for deafblind people allowed to be (recognised as) interpreters in sign language for deaf people?

YES ☐ NO ☐

C.9 Social recognition of Interpreter-Guides for Deafblind People.

Do they get a special acknowledged diploma?

YES ☐ NO ☐

Do they get a salary different from sign language interpreters

Higher ☐
Lower ☐
Same ☐

C.10 Who pays for the training?

the trainee/student ☐
voluntary organisations ☐
employers ☐
it is free (supported by the state) ☐

C.11 Are the trainees/students paid during their training?

YES ☐ NO ☐

C.12 Which organisation provides the training?

University ☐
Voluntary organisation ☐
Other? ☐

C.13 Do you wish to make any other comments about training?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey

Please return to CACDP, Durham University Science Park, Block 4, Stockton Road, Durham DH1 3UZ.

ii) Questionnaire Sent to Member Organisations

DEAFBLIND SURVEY FOR SERVICE USER ORGANISATIONS

Section A Legislation And Rights To Interpreting Services For Deafblind People

A.1 Do deafblind people have a legal right to interpreter time in your country?

Yes ☐ No ☐

A1.1 If yes, does the law say how many hours of interpreting time per year deafblind people are able to have?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, please state the number of hours____________

A1.2 Do deafblind people feel the number of hours allowed is reasonable?

YES NO ☐

A.2 Does a deafblind person have a right to an interpreter for: *(Please tick if they apply)*

- further or higher education classes ☐
- medical / hospital appointments ☐
- work ☐
- Court ☐
- shopping and other daily tasks ☐
- leisure and social activities ☐
- other? (please explain) ☐

A.3 Are interpreting services **free** to deafblind people?

YES NO ☐

If no, what is the charging policy? *(Please tick)*

- A fixed number of hours are free, above that there is a charge ☐
- Deafblind people pay according to their means ☐
- Deafblind people pay interpreter expenses only (eg travel) ☐
- Other (please explain) ☐

A.4 If deafblind people **do not** have legal rights how have interpreting services for deafblind people been developed? By the following organisations: *(Please tick the things you think were important)*

Campaigning by deafblind organisations ☐
Campaigning by deaf or blind organisations ☐
Campaigning by professionals ☐
Support of regional or local government ☐
Support of central government ☐
Existence of civil rights for disabled people ☐
Other (please explain) ☐

A.5 Are deafblind organisations campaigning to include the rights of deafblind people to interpreters in law/statute?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If no, what else is being done?

A.6 Do deafblind people in your country have problems getting interpreters?

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, what are the problems:

Some deafblind people do not know what is available ☐
Interpreting services are not available everywhere ☐
The standard of interpreting is different across the country ☐
There are not enough trained interpreters ☐
Interpreting services are underfunded ☐
Services are not good ☐
Services are provided for deaf people and don't really meet the needs of deafblind people ☐
There is no political support for providing interpreter services ☐

A.7 If a deafblind person is unhappy about interpreting:

a) to whom can they complain?

b) what action can be taken?

A.8 What do deafblind people hope will be improved about interpreting services over the next few years?

A.9 Do you wish to make any other comments?

Section B Roles And Functions Of The Deafblind Interpreter
(Interpreter here means somebody who has been recognised as an interpreter for the deafblind or the deaf according to the law or custom in your country)

B.1 Which functions do interpreters in your country have? *(please tick)*

language transmission ☐
guiding ☐
transmitting visual information (situations, surroundings, people etc) ☐

B.2 What skills should interpreters have? *(Please tick the skills an interpreter would be expected to have)*

Sign language ☐
Sign language by touch ☐
Fingerspelling ☐
Printed letters on palm ☐
Writing in appropriate way ☐
Braille ☐
Clear speech ☐
Typing ☐
Other ☐

B.3 What are the most common methods of communication used by deafblind people in your country?

- Sign language ☐
- Sign language by touch ☐
- Fingerspelling ☐
- Printed letters on palm ☐
- Writing in appropriate way ☐
- Braille ☐
- Clear speech ☐
- Typing ☐
- Other ☐

B.4 What issues have deafblind people been raising recently about interpreting and why?

B.5 What are the current problems with how deafblind interpreters work?

B.6 What improvements would you wish to see in the job of a deafblind interpreter?

B.7 Are any new developments planned?

B.8 Do you wish to make any further comments?

Section C. Models Of Interpreter Training

C.1.1 Do you have Guides for Deafblind people

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, what is their training ?

C1.2 Do you have Interpreter-Guides for Deafblind people

YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes, what is their training ?

C1.3 Do you have Interpreters for Deafblind people

YES ☐ NO ☐

C1.4 Are there any other professional workers?
If yes, please name them

C.2 Are deafblind people satisfied with the training provided for deafblind interpreters?

YES ☐ NO ☐

C.3 Do you know of any plans to develop training for deafblind interpreters in the future?

YES ☐ NO ☐

C.4 Do you wish to make any other comments about training?

Section D. General Comments

D.1 Do you wish to make any comments at all about deafblind people's views on services or on any other matter?

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey

Please return to CACDP, Durham University Science Park, Block 4, Stockton Road, Durham DH1 3UZ.

If you wish to discuss any of the questions or require any explanation please do not hesitate to contact:

Lynne Hawcroft

Tel: (44) 161 9697383
Fax: (44) 161 976955
Email: 100647.545@compuserve.com

Appendix IV

Initial Letter sent to Organisations in Europe

21 December 1998

European Comparative Study and Symposium on Interpreting for Deafblind People

Organised By
Council for the Advancement Of Communication With Deaf People (UK)
Hogeschool Van Utrecht, Seminarium voor Orthopedagogiek (The Netherlands)
Lega del Filo d'oro (Italy)
in association with
Deafblind International

Sponsored By
A European Commission Grant For Exchange and Information Actions on Equal Opportunities for Disabled People

Dear Colleague

I am writing to invite you to take part in research about interpreting for deafblind people in European countries. The study will collect information about:

- **Types of training provided for interpreters for deafblind people**
- **The role of interpreters in different countries**
- **The legal basis for providing interpreting services**

The purpose of the study is to assist all countries to develop quality interpreting services for their deafblind citizens and to promote a common agenda of action across Europe. An interim report on the research findings will be presented to the European Symposium on Developments and Innovations in Interperting for Deafblind People to be held in Holland on 3/4/5 June 1999. You will have already received the first announcement about the symposium.

The symposium will include three overview papers on the topics which will be covered by the research in much more detail, so you may also be contaxcted by the presenters of the overview papers for information.

A final report on the comparative study will be circulated to organisations taking part in the research during October 1999.

A questionnaire will be sent to you at the end January 1999 to be returned by 26 March 1999. Could you please complete and return the attached contact sheet with the correct details. If the questionnaire should be sent to someone else would you please give the contact sheet to them. I do hope you will be able to be involved in the research and I look forward to being in contact with you in January 1999.

Yours sincerely

Lynne Hawcroft
Researcher

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